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NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

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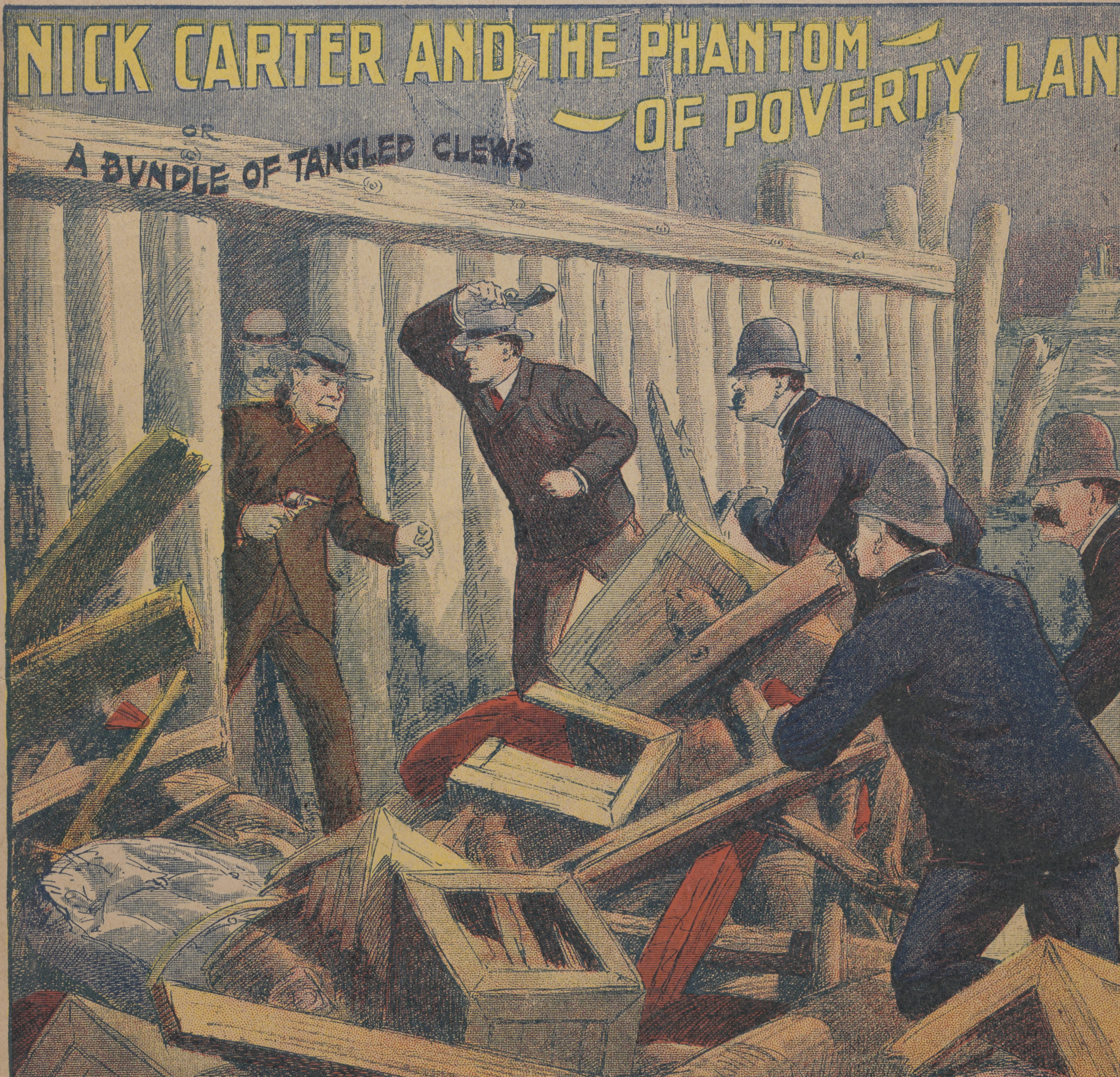

NICK CARTER AND THE PHANTOM OF POVERTY LANE

OR A BUNDLE OF TANGLED CLEWS

BY THE AUTHOR OF "NICK CARTER"

NICK GAVE THE CORRECT SIGNAL, THE DOOR WAS OPENED, AND THE DETECTIVE FELLED THE FIRST MAN TO APPEAR WITH THE BUTT OF HIS REVOLVER.

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Nick Carter and the Phantom of Poverty Lane;

OR,

A BUNDLE OF TANGLED CLEWS.

By the author of "NICHOLAS CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

A DOUBLE MYSTERY.

"Rose Fairfield, you can remain here no longer."

"Very well, Miss Willoughby, I will go just as soon as I can pack up my things."

"You will take only your clothing. The jewels belong to our family, and you must give them to me."

"Your uncle gave them to me."

"He only permitted you to wear them."

"Miss Willoughby!"

"There is no use to discuss this matter with me, for my brother and myself have decided that you have no claim upon us, and you are entitled to nothing."

"If Uncle Henry were here."

"Well, he isn't. You say 'Uncle Henry.' You are no relation."

"I may be no relation, but I loved Mr. Willoughby dearer than any one in this world."

"Yes, you loved him for what you got out of him."

"You may say that, but it is false. And, Laura Willoughby, I want to tell you, that while you and your brother Horace will take no steps toward investigating your uncle's disappearance, I propose to devote the rest of my days in trying to discover what has become of him."

"You will turn into a detective, eh?"

"No, but I shall secure the services of the best detective in New York and put him on the case."

"That will cost money."

"I have some little money."

"And pray who will you employ?"

"I will not tell you. Good-by."

"Ta-ta, Rosie dear. I wish you success."

Rose Fairfield, a beautiful girl of nineteen summers, with head erect, face flushed with excitement, and eyes sparkling with great brilliancy, swept out of the library of the Willoughby mansion on upper Fifth Avenue, leaving Laura Willoughby, the niece of Henry Willoughby, the millionaire tobacco merchant, standing in the center of the room shaking with rage.

Henry Willoughby was a man of seventy-five years of age, and was considered to be worth several millions, all of which he had made in the tobacco trade.

As far as was known, he had never been married, and the only relatives which he had were his brother's son and daughter.

The old tobacco merchant had quarreled with his nephew and niece, and for several years he would not permit them to enter his house, although he gave each of them a handsome yearly allowance.

In many ways old Willoughby was very eccentric.

He was very charitable, and at times he would give thousands of dollars to some institution devoted to the assistance of the poor.

Fourteen years before the commencement of our narrative, one cold winter's night, Willoughby had come home, carrying a child in his arms, and taking her to his housekeeper, he said:

"This little one's mother has died and I propose to adopt her. Look after her, Mrs. Peck, and see that she is fixed up."

This child was Rose Fairfield.

She grew up to be a beautiful woman, and the old millionaire loved her as if she were his own flesh and blood.

And Rose returned the affection.

She was always attentive to her foster-father, and was never happy unless she was looking after his wants.

Who or what her parents were, Rose never knew.

Old Willoughby would never tell her anything about them.

All that she could remember about them was a pale-faced woman lying upon a cot in an attic room, and impressing a dying kiss upon her brow.

Two weeks before the interview in the library, Henry Willoughby had left his house one morning, kissing Rose good-by, and nothing had been heard of him since that time.

It is true that a body had been picked up in the Hudson River which Horace and Laura had identified as that of their uncle, but Rose Fairfield could not believe that it was her foster-father.

Laura and Horace had taken possession of the property, and had decided to drive Rose out of the house.

No will had been found, but there was a memorandum in the safe to the effect that if he should die, the old millionaire desired his heirs to see that Rose was well provided for.

This was the way in which they respected his wishes.

Laura Willoughby was a woman nearly thirty years of age, a pronounced blonde, with gray eyes and sharp features.

Laura Willoughby and her brother hated Rose on account of the place she occupied in their uncle's house.

When Rose Fairfield left the library there was a determined expression upon her face.

She went direct to her room, and after packing a trunk, she called a maid, and handing her a casket, said:

"Take this to Miss Willoughby. Tell her that I have gone," and then putting on her things she left the house.

While standing on the elevated railroad platform waiting for a downtown train, Rose took from her pocket a slip cut from a newspaper, and consulting it, murmured:

"I will go and see this man whom they call Nick Carter and engage him."

As she entered the car she did not notice that a man who entered behind her was eying her closely.

She was too busy thinking about what she intended to do.

Rose got off at the City Hall station.

After a short walk, she stopped in the hallway of a building.

After inspecting the signboard she proceeded upstairs and stopped before a door on the top floor, on which was a sign:

"NICHOLAS CARTER,
"Detective."

Rose rapped on the door.

A man, with rather a boyish-looking face, opened the door and bowed to her.

He was of medium build, and he was possessed of a pair of eyes which seemed to have the power of reading the innermost thoughts of those with whom he had dealings.

"I want to see Mr. Carter," Rose said as the man confronted her.

"I am the individual," the man replied. "Please step in."

Rose entered the room.

Rose, after she was seated, explained her business, and when she concluded, the detective said:

"Miss Fairfield, I will take hold of this matter for you, and will endeavor to find out what was the cause of Mr. Willoughby's disappearance."

"I cannot believe that that was his body," Rose said.

"Do you suspect foul play?"

"I cannot say what I suspect, but I think that it is very strange."

"And this nephew and niece ordered you from the house?"

"They did."

"Have you any money?"

"I have a few thousand dollars in the bank, which I saved out of my allowance."

"What do you propose to do?"

"I intend to start a millinery store as soon as I can find a good location."

"Where are you going to stay?"

"I will get a boarding place."

"Have you one in mind?"

"I am going to a house on Washington Square, kept by a widow named Elvers."

"Do you know the number?"

"I think it is No. 13."

"I will call."

Rose Fairfield left Nick Carter's office, and when she walked across to Broadway, the man who had eyed her so closely in the elevated train, and who had been standing on the corner while she was in the detective's office, followed her.

A minute after Rose had gone, Nick Carter tapped a bell on his desk.

A young man entered. It was Chick, the great detective's most trusted assistant.

"Well, Chick!" Nick Carter exclaimed as soon as the young man entered. "What have you to report about the 'Phantom of Poverty Lane?'"

"The people up there say that it looks like old Willoughby, the millionaire. They think that it is his ghost," replied Chick.

"They say that the phantom looks like old Willoughby?" Nick exclaimed as he straightened himself up in his chair.

"That is what they all say," Chick answered.

"Did any of them know Willoughby?"

"A good many of them knew him."

"How is that?"

"At times he was in the habit of visiting the lane, and many and many a poor family he has assisted."

"Have any of them seen the face of this mysterious personage?"

"Several declare that they have."

"What have you learned?"

"About two weeks ago this phantom began to make its appearance."

"During the day or night?"

"Always after midnight. It would appear in the room of some poor family, while they were in bed, if the door were open, leave some article of food or clothing, and then disappear as if by magic."

"A very charitable ghost, I should say."

"Then again it would rap at a door, dart away, and when the occupant of the room would open it, he or she would find a basket full of provisions and no one would be around. Attempts have been made to follow the phantom, but so far it has eluded all pursuers."

"Have you been able to see it?"

"No; for the last three days it has not appeared."

"Well, Chick, phantom or no phantom, we will have to find out who it is."

"What about this girl?"

"You mean Rose Fairfield?"

"Yes."

"You heard what she said?"

"I was listening."

"What do you think?"

"It is a curious case."

"It is."

"And you have taken hold of it when you have this Poverty Lane mystery on hand."

"We can work on both."

"It is strange that the people should declare that the phantom is that of old Willoughby."

"We will get at the bottom of both of them before we let up."

"Have you any instructions?"

"Yes."

"What are they?"

"Willoughby has a nephew and niece who have taken possession of the property."

"So I understand."

"The nephew's name is Horace."

"Well?"

"I want you to find out all that you can about him."

"What does he do?"

"The directory credits him with being a lawyer."

"Where is his office?"

"Temple Court."

"What are you going to do?"

"I am going to Poverty Lane."

"When?"

"Now."

"I'm off to look after Mr. Horace."

Chick jumped up from his chair.

He pulled his hat down over his eyes and darted from the room.

Nick Carter, as soon as his assistant had left the room, opened one of the wardrobes and put on an old suit of clothes.

Ten minutes after the detective issued forth into Chambers Street dressed as a tramp.

Poverty Lane was a narrow court leading off of Eldridge Street.

It was only one block long.

Both sides of the street were occupied by squalid tenements, and all of these were filled with poor people.

The houses were owned by an old contractor named Nathan Richards.

He was an old miser, and lived in a small house up in Harlem.

No one was harder with the tenants than he, and if the rent was not paid promptly when it was due, Richards would dispossess the unlucky ones.

When the so-called phantom appeared and Richards heard of it, he became frightened.

He hastened to Nick Carter's office and besought the detective to look into the matter and solve the mystery.

At first Nick was not inclined to take hold of the case.

But his curiosity was aroused, and at last he consented to make an investigation.

This was three days before the appearance of Rose Fairfield at his office.

Nick Carter entered Poverty Lane.

As he did so he saw a crowd of men, women and children gathered outside of a house at the end of the lane.

A woman stood in the center of the group gesticulating wildly.

"He came into my room," the detective heard the woman exclaim as he drew near. "I was asleep, and he woke me up."

"What did he leave?" one of the men asked.

"He shoved this five-dollar bill into my hand and run off," the woman replied, as she exhibited the crisp new bill.

"You needn't to kick up such a fuss over it," a woman exclaimed. "It'll pay yer rent, and yer know dat yer wor goin' ter be ousted dis afternoon ef you didn't git it."

"I know that, but——"

"Yer afraid ter use it."

"It was the phantom."

"I wish that phantom'd show up in my place."

"What way did he go?" a man inquired.

"I don't know," the woman replied.

"Why didn't you follow him?"

"I was too scared."

"Well, you've got the money, use it."

The crowd dispersed, and the woman returned to her room.

She did not remain long.

What few things she owned she packed up and moved away.

Nick Carter moved about among the people of the lane and listened to their conversation about the phantom.

All were excited.

All sorts of theories were expounded.

It was near evening and Nick decided to remain in the vicinity and see if the phantom would appear again.

This was the first time that he had appeared during the daytime.

The woman who had been relieved had recently lost her husband, and she had not been able to get work.

Nick Carter took up a station at the entrance to the lane about ten o'clock.

Here he proposed to watch and scrutinize every one who passed in and out.

If the phantom made his appearance he would make an effort to capture him.

The detective understood perfectly well how easy it had been for the man to elude pursuit.

The people whom he had visited were so frightened that this had given him plenty of time to get away and cover up his tracks.

As far as he had been able to learn, Nick discovered that the man had appeared only in the houses in Poverty Lane.

It was a dark night.

Just such a night as a man with such peculiar habits as the phantom would choose to be abroad.

The clock in a neighboring steeple chimed the hour of twelve.

Just then a tall, thin man entered the court.

He rushed by Nick Carter, and disappeared in one of the houses in the center of the block.

In his arms he carried a package.

It was too dark for the detective to see who he was.

He had passed so unexpectedly and swiftly that Nick could not detain him.

Was this the phantom?

The detective made up his mind to follow and find out.

CHAPTER II.

THE MYSTERY DEEPENS.

Rose Fairfield went to the boarding house and sent an expressman to the Willoughby mansion for her trunks.

She instructed the man not to give any information to any one at the house where she was to be found.

Then she sat down and wrote a short note which she went out and got a messenger to deliver.

All the time that she was in the boarding house the man who had followed her remained on the corner.

When she came out to send the note the man strolled leisurely along behind her.

This man was not prepossessing in appearance.

He was low-sized and was dressed in a shabby black suit.

A scraggly brown beard covered his face.

He walked with a shuffling gait.

One who was experienced in dealing with criminals, and who took notice of the manner in which the man walked, could have told at a glance that he had served time.

In spite of his care at times he would break into the prison lock-step.

What could this man want with Rose Fairfield?

When Rose returned to the boarding house, the man waited around some time on the corner, and then at last, when evening came, he slunk away.

Rose was acquainted with the boarding mistress.

This made things more pleasant for her.

She was a motherly old lady, and Rose made her acquaintance one summer at a farmhouse in the White Mountains, where she was staying.

That evening, after dinner, Rose was seated in her room, when a servant rapped on the door, and announced that a gentleman had called to see her.

She ordered the girl to show the visitor up, and a few minutes afterward a young man entered the room.

Rose's face brightened when she saw him, and she exclaimed, as she shook his hand:

"Alan, I am glad to see you. I hardly knew whether you would come or not."

"Why, of course I would come, Rose. You might have known that. What is the meaning of this?" Alan Walters replied, as he looked with admiring eyes into the girl's handsome face.

"Sit down and I will tell you."

Alan Walters was the son of a widow whose husband had been an intimate friend of the millionaire tobacco merchant.

When Alan's father died, leaving his widow in straitened circumstances, Henry Willoughby assisted the widow, educated the young man, and when he graduated from college, gave him a position in his large factory.

During his visits at the Willoughby mansion to see his employer Alan had met the millionaire's ward, and a close friendship had sprung up between them.

Alan was several years older than Rose, being about twenty-five.

His form was athletic and tall.

In his clear blue eyes there was an honesty of expression that was pleasing to behold, showing that he was not one to deal in subterfuge or deceit.

"I have left the Willoughby mansion," Rose said as soon as she and Alan were seated opposite to each other.

"What are the reasons?" Alan asked.

Rose explained to him all about her tiff with Laura Willoughby, and then what she had done.

"I think as you do, Rose," Alan exclaimed when Rose had finished speaking. "If that was Mr. Willoughby's body, then there must have been foul play, and if it were not, then there is a mystery which needs to be solved. You did one ill-advised thing."

"What was that?"

"You should not have told Laura Willoughby anything about what you intended to do."

"Why not?"

"I can't tell, but I have a sort of feeling that now she and her brother Horace will throw obstacles in the way of making a thorough investigation."

"What object could they have in doing such a thing?"

"It is impossible for me to say."

"Do you think that Uncle Henry met with foul play?"

"I believe he did."

"I never knew him to have any enemies."

"And still he may have had."

"Yes. But, Alan, I feel confident that the body was not his. It was terribly decomposed, and no one could be able to identify it for a certainty."

"But then there were those letters found in the pocket and his watch, and other jewelry was found in his room."

"I do not believe in the suicide theory."

"Neither do I."

"If Horace Willoughby assumes charge of the business, I suppose I will have to go."

"How is that?"

"He and I are not on friendly terms."

"How long have you been unfriendly?"

"Ever since we were at college."

"You were in the same class with him?"

"Yes; he was jealous of me because I always ranked higher than he did, and I was more popular."

"He is a lawyer?"

"Yes, and I guess he has few briefs. I hear he is rather dissolute in his habits."

"I know he gambles."

"How did you learn that?"

"Mr. Willoughby paid his debts several times, and that was one of the causes of the falling out between his uncle and him."

Alan Walters chatted some time with Rose, and then, after promising to call the next evening, he took his departure.

Alan walked across Washington Square and turned up through University Place, intending to walk up to Broadway and then take a surface car.

After he had reached Clinton Place a strange feeling came over the young man.

"I feel as if some one were shadowing me," Alan muttered.

When he reached Thirteenth Street he stopped on the corner and turned suddenly around.

As he did so, Alan saw a man on the opposite side of the street dart into a doorway and stand back in the shadow.

Who was that man?

Had he been following him?

Alan decided to find out.

He halted suddenly in front of a music store on Union Square.

He would let the man pass him and get a glimpse of his face.

But the fellow did not pass.

He had stepped around the corner, and Alan could see that he was peering around the edge of the building at him.

"I'll find out who that fellow is," Alan muttered, and then he strode toward the place where the man was hiding.

* * * * * * *

Nick Carter reached the entrance of the house into which the man disappeared.

The detective stepped into the hall.

From the glimpse which he had got of the man he appeared to be better dressed than the rest of the inhabitants of Poverty Lane.

Nick waited for a considerable time in the hall.

Hearing no disturbance, he came to the conclusion that the man lived in the house, and he walked out into the street.

Hardly had the detective put his foot on the pavement, when he was startled by a scream coming from the back of the house.

"Help! help! the phantom!" cried a woman's voice.

Nick Carter waited to hear no more.

He ran into the hall.

From under his coat the detective pulled his dark lantern.

He flashed the light around in all directions.

Seeing the back hall door close, Nick ran toward it.

When he reached it he discovered it was locked.

He heard a voice in the yard.

The woman kept up her screaming.

Nick Carter ran into the woman's room

Then he threw up the back window.

Throwing the light into the yard, he was just in time to see a man vault over the fence.

Back of this was a narrow alley, which ran between the yards and opened into the side street.

Nick Carter, when he saw the man on the fence, knew that he was going to make his escape through the alley.

Without waiting to question the woman, the detective hurried out of the house and then ran along the court to the street.

He was too late.

A man was seated in a buggy, and was driving down the street at a lively rate of speed.

It was impossible for Nick Carter to follow.

But as the buggy turned around the corner, and the light from the electric lamp fell upon the occupant, Nick saw that it was the same man whom he had seen getting over the fence.

"Well, he is flesh and blood, that is certain," the detective exclaimed, as he turned back into Poverty Lane and re-entered the house, going to the room which the phantom had visited.

The place was occupied by a young woman, who was standing in the center of the room when the detective entered, and a man, who was lying on a cot in a corner.

Nick saw at a glance that the man was dying with consumption.

The woman was hysterical, and the man was endeavoring to pacify her.

She looked up when Nick entered, and was about to utter a scream when the detective said:

"You needn't be afraid, I won't hurt you."

"Oh, I thought it was that phantom again," the woman gasped.

"That was no phantom."

"So I've been telling her," the sick man ejaculated. "Ghosts and phantoms don't leave money and things about people's houses."

"What did he do?" Nick asked.

"I was seated at the table here reading, waiting for the time when I was to give my husband his medicine. I forgot to lock the door. Suddenly I heard the door open. I looked around and saw a man. In his hand he held this bundle, which he laid on the table, and then disappeared."

"Did you see his face?"

"I was too frightened to take particular notice of it, but it looked like Mr. Willoughby, the dead millionaire. When he was alive he was very good to us, sir."

"You have not opened the bundle?"

"No."

"Open it."

The woman did as she was directed.

Several gold pieces rolled out on the table.

There were three bottles of wine and brandy and some delicacies.

"I'm afraid to touch these," the woman exclaimed.

"Bosh!" the man rejoined.

"Let me see that slip of paper," Nick said as he pointed to a slip of white paper around one of the bottles.

With trembling hands the woman picked up the paper and handed it to the detective.

Nick Carter opened it.

It was a cash check with the name of a firm of grocers on the top, where the goods had been bought.

"You can give your husband this wine and brandy with safety," Nick remarked. "These things have come from a reliable house."

Nick left the room.

He took the bill with him.

There was no use to remain longer in Poverty Lane.

The phantom would not make another visit to the place that night.

Nick went to his office, where he expected to find Chick.

Chick had not yet put in an appearance.

Even when morning came the young man did not show up.

This did not worry Nick Carter.

He was pleased.

Chick's absence was an indication that the young man had got onto something and was following it up.

The detective went early to the grocery store where the goods had been bought.

It was not difficult for him to find the clerk who had made out the bill.

The clerk's number and signature were on the memorandum.

Nick went up to him, and showing him the slip, asked:

"Did you sell this bill of goods yesterday?"

"I did," the clerk replied, after he had glanced at the slip.

"Do you know the person to whom you sold them?"

"I do not."

"Have you ever sold him anything before?"

"A number of times."

"Lately?"

"For the last five weeks."

"What kind of an appearing man is he?"

"He is a man about seventy, tall and slim, with rather broad features and long, white hair."

"Have you ever talked with him much?"

"No. He has been in the habit of coming in here, ordering his goods, paying for them, and then going out without exchanging ten words with any one."

"Did he come here in a buggy?"

"Always."

"And you have no idea where he lives?"

"I have not."

Nick Carter was perplexed.

When he entered the store he hoped that he would be able to discover something about the mysterious philanthropist.

But he could learn nothing.

The detective returned to his office.

While the detective was cogitating, some one rapped on the office door.

"Come in," Nick called out.

The door opened and a man entered.

He was a stranger to the detective.

Nick inspected him.

He was a tall, broad-shouldered man, with black hair and a heavy black beard.

His face was tanned, and there was a large scar over the right temple, which might have been caused by a saber cut.

His hands were large, and the detective saw that they were rough and stained.

"Are you Mr. Carter?" the visitor inquired in a deep bass voice.

"I am," Nick rejoined.

"I have come to secure your services.

"I have heard a great deal of you, Mr. Carter, and I would like you to hear my story."

"I am willing to listen to you."

The man took from his pocket a bundle of papers, removed his hat, and, after placing the documents on the desk in front of the detective, said:

"My name is Jacques Anton, and by birth I am a French Canadian. Twenty years ago I came to New York and married a young woman. All my life I have been a seafaring man. Three weeks after my marriage I sailed on the *Louise Porter* for Africa. Our ship was wrecked off the coast, and all who escaped from the wreck were made captives by the savages.

"We were taken into the interior, and up to one year ago we saw no chance of escape. At last I managed to get away by secreting myself in a slave trader's caravan, and from there I escaped to the diamond fields.

"I remained there a short time, and was able to make a fortune. Then I started for New York to try and find my wife. I went to the place where I had left her, and found that the house had been torn down, and a business block erected. During all these years I have managed to preserve these papers, which relate to my marriage and my wife's birth."

"What was your wife's maiden name?"

"Rose Willoughby."

"Were her parents alive when you married her?"

"They were not."

"I will take these papers, Mr. Anton, and will see what I can do for you."

"You will find among them a picture of my wife."

"Where are you stopping?"

"At the Hoffman House."

"You will hear from me in a few days."

Jacques Anton left the detective's office, and as soon as Nick Carter was alone he looked over the papers and at the photograph.

"Well, this is strange," the detective ejaculated, when he had placed the papers away in his safe. "Here are three cases and the name of Willoughby bobs up in every one of them. It is curious."

The door of the office was thrown violently open and Chick came in, exclaiming as he threw himself down on the chair by the side of the desk:

"I've had a terrible time of it."

CHAPTER III.

ALAN'S MISFORTUNES.

Alan Walters was close onto the man before the fellow was aware of it.

The young man caught him by the coat collar.

"Why are you following me?" Alan demanded, holding tight on to the man so that he could not get away.

"I'm not following you," the man stuttered, and Alan saw that his face turned pale.

"I wasn't looking at you. Let me go."

"Not much. Come out here until I get a good look at your face."

The man struggled hard.

Alan Walters, being stronger than he, succeeded in dragging him out into the light.

"Let me go, I say," the man cried out, "or you will regret it!"

"I'm not afraid," Alan rejoined. "You have got to tell me, Mr. Sim Elvers, why you have been following me."

Alan had recognized the man.

He was one of the workmen employed around the factory.

Sim was a careless, dissolute and lazy man.

Alan and he had not got along very well together.

The young man had been forced to tell Sim that, unless he did his work better, he would be forced to have him discharged.

Therefore Elvers hated Alan.

When Alan Walters recognized Sim, he knew that the man had not followed him of his own volition, and that he must have been employed by some one.

"Come, Sim, there is no use to deny it now," Alan exclaimed. "I know that you have been following me."

"I have not," Sim Elvers rejoined.

"If you do not tell me why you have followed me I'll turn you over to the police, and have you locked up!"

"Let go your hold on my collar."

"Oh, no, Sim. I've got you and I do not intend to let you give me the slip."

"What is it you want to know?"

"I told you."

"Well, then, I was following you for my own satisfaction."

"That is not so, Sim."

"Then it isn't."

Alan Walters was silent.

He hardly knew what to do.

If he had Sim arrested, he would have to appear against him.

Then there would be those at the factory who would say that it was spite.

Could he afford that?

By threatening to have Sim Elvers arrested, he had hoped to frighten the fellow into telling the reason why he was following him.

Sim was moody.

His face was black.

There was an ugly expression about his eyes.

Alan's hesitancy emboldened him.

"Say, look here, Walters," he exclaimed, "are you going to let me go?"

Alan was losing his temper.

"Yes, you can go," he retorted. "There, take that, and it will teach you not to sneak after people again."

Alan pushed the rascal from him and administered a vigorous kick, which caused Sim to cry out with pain.

"You'll pay dearly for this," Sim cried out, shaking his fist at Alan; but when he saw the young man start for him again he took to his heels and ran as fast as his legs would carry him.

"There, I've made a fool of myself!" Alan ejaculated when he had become calm. "I should have let the rascal go and not done anything to him, but he exasperated me so that I could not help it."

Then he started for home.

The next morning Sim Elvers was not at the factory.

About eleven o'clock an office boy came to Alan and said:

"Mr. Walters, you are wanted in the office."

"Who wants me?" Alan asked.

"The new boss."

Alan went direct to the office.

As he entered he saw Horace Willoughby seated at his uncle's desk.

Horace was a tall man.

His sandy hair was prematurely sprinkled with gray.

His face was red and bloated from dissipation.

A cynical expression played around the corners of his mouth.

"You sent for me, Mr. Willoughby," Alan said in as polite a tone as he could muster.

"Yes, I sent for you," Horace replied in a hoarse tone.

"What do you want?"

"I desire to inform you that your services are no longer required."

"You mean that you discharge me?"

"I do."

"Very well."

Alan turned and started toward the door.

He reached it and was about to go out, when Horace Willoughby called to him.

Alan looked back.

"What is it?" he asked.

"You are interested in Rose Fairfield, aren't you?" Horace said.

"That is none of your business," Alan retorted as a flush mantled his brow.

"I want to tell you that you and that girl had better stop meddling with my affairs."

"We are not meddling with your affairs."

"She has employed a detective to investigate my uncle's death."

"She has a perfect right to do so."

"No, she has not."

"I can't argue with you about that."

"Well, I warn you."

"What can you do?"

"I will show you if she doesn't drop it."

"Neither Rose nor myself are afraid of anything you may do."

"You are not?"

"No."

"I will make you."

"Try it on."

Alan felt that he was losing his temper.

He concluded that the best thing for him to do was to get out of the office, so without saying another word he left the presence of the man who, he saw, hated him bitterly.

To return to Nick Carter and Chick.

"You had a terrible time of it," Nick ejaculated as he glanced across at Chick.

"You can bet I did," Chick rejoined.

"How was that?"

"After I left here I started to find out all that I could about Horace Willoughby."

"Where did you go to first?"

"I went to his office."

"Was he in?"

"He was, and he had two men with him. And who do you think they were?"

"I cannot imagine."

"Jim Porter was one and Aben-Hamet, the Arab, was the other."

"You are sure?"

"Don't I know them both?"

"I should think you ought to."

"When I saw who were in the office, I tried to find out what they were talking about."

"Did you succeed?"

"Not very well. I only heard them mention your name several times. I could see from their looks that they were up to some game, and I became convinced of this when Horace Willoughby handed each a roll of bills."

"They came out of the office?"

"Right after they received the boodle."

"Did you follow them?"

"I did, for I thought it was best to do so."

"Where did they go to?"

"Up to Meg Cole's.

"She has opened a joint on First Street near Second Avenue."

"What kind of a place is it?"

"The same as her old place in the Bend with the exception that it is fitted up much better. There is a saloon on the ground floor, with three rooms in the back, and then she has the rooms upstairs over the saloon."

"What did Porter and Aben-Hamet do when they got to Meg Cole's?"

"They went into a back room; I put on a disguise and followed them in, taking a seat at one of the tables near them."

"What passed between Porter and the Arab?"

"Porter spoke about following some woman, and after a time I heard him mention the name of Rose Fairfield. Then I knew that it was she whom he had followed."

"He did it for Horace Willoughby."

"So I concluded."

"It is lucky you made this discovery, Chick."

"Well, they spoke in low tones after that, and I could not hear what they were saying. But at last, Porter got up and exclaimed: 'We will do the trick day after tomorrow. I will keep my eye on the girl and you make the arrangements!'"

"They evidently referred to Miss Fairfield."

"That is what I thought."

"After that, what happened?"

"Aben-Hamet looked over at me. How he discovered my identity I cannot make out. But he uttered a cry in Arabic, jumped across the room and caught me by the throat before I could do anything."

"That was unfortunate."

"I struggled to free myself but could not. Porter drew his pistol and hit me a clip behind the ear which stunned me."

Here Chick paused and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"When you recovered, where were you?" Nick Carter asked.

"I found myself in a dark place," Chick replied, "and after a time I discovered that it was a cellar. I found a grating open and crept out into the street."

"What did you do then?"

"I came straight here."

"You have done well, Chick."

"Have you any further orders?"

"None at present. You can keep onto the tracks of Horace Willoughby."

Carter gave Chick an account of his work the night before, and then started for the boarding house where Rose Fairfield had engaged board.

As he was about to ascend the steps of the house on Washington Square, the detective met Alan Walters.

Alan was not acquainted with the detective, and when they walked up to the front stoop he had no idea that the man behind him was the famous detective.

Alan rang the bell.

The boarding mistress opened the door.

"I have called to see Miss Fairfield," Alan said.

"Miss Fairfield is not in," the woman replied.

"Didn't you send her a message early this morning asking her to meet you?"

"I did not?"

"Now, that is strange."

"What is strange?"

"A messenger delivered a note to Miss Fairfield about nine o'clock this morning. She came downstairs and told me that you had sent for her. What can this mean? I'm greatly worried now."

"Do you know where the messenger came from?"

"He was not a messenger boy."

"Who was he?"

"He looked like a foreigner."

"A foreigner?"

"He was a man about forty, and very dark featured."

"Excuse me, madam, but did he have a scar in the center of his forehead?" Nick Carter, who had remained silent until now, inquired.

Alan and the landlady looked at the detective for the first time.

The woman did not reply, and Alan said:

"Do you know Miss Fairfield?"

"I have met her once," Nick Carter replied.

"May I ask your name?"

"It is Nicholas Carter."

"I am glad to meet you. My name is Alan Walters, and I am Miss Fairfield's intimate friend."

"I'm pleased to meet you."

"Why did you ask that question?"

"Because I think I know the man."

"He had a scar in the center of his forehead, now that I come to think of it," the landlady interrupted.

"Was he a slim man?" Nick questioned.

"He was."

"What did he say?"

"When I opened the door he said that he had a note for Miss Fairfield, and I called her down, leaving her to talk with the man. I did not hear what he said to her."

"Was she excited?"

"Slightly."

"Do you think, Mr. Carter, that Rose has been led into a trap?" Alan asked.

"I'm afraid so."

"Then this is Horace Willoughby's doings."

"What makes you think so?"

Alan told the detective of his experience with Sim Elvers the night before, and what had occurred at the factory.

"Tell no one else about this," Nick admonished, when he and Alan had left the house.

"What do you intend to do?" Alan inquired.

"I propose to look for Rose Fairfield."

"But where will you look?"

"I will try and find the man who delivered the note."

"Who is he?"

"He is an Arab named Aben-Hamet. He pretends to be able to tell fortunes, and claims to be a seer."

"Can't I be of any assistance?"

"Not at present."

"What object can Horace Willoughby have in all this?"

"You may depend upon it that he has some object."

"There is foul play some place."

"If there is we will find it out."

Nick Carter separated from Alan, and started for the place kept by Meg Cole.

The detective thought that he might be able to find out something here.

But when he reached the den on First Street, he was surprised to find it closed.

CHAPTER IV.

ROSE AND THE ARAB.

But what had become of Rose Fairfield?

Nick Carter was right in the supposition that the man who had brought the note to the boarding house was Aben-Hamet, the Arab seer.

The detective knew the fellow to be an arrant knave, but up to the present time he had never been able to make a case against him.

Jim Porter, the man whom Chick had seen in company with the Arab, was a sneak thief.

Nick Carter had arrested him several times.

Rose was seated in her room busy writing a letter to a schoolgirl friend, when the landlady announced the arrival of the messenger with the note.

Aben-Hamet handed her the letter.

"Who is this from?" Rose asked as she looked at the writing, which was strange to her.

"A gentleman who has been hurt," the Arab replied. "He is at my mistress' house."

Instantly Rose tore the envelope open and read:

"I have been slightly injured, and am at No. — Lexington Avenue. Please come over as soon as possible, as I desire to communicate something of great importance to you. This is written at my dictation by the lady who owns this house. Alan Walters."

"I will go," Rose exclaimed, as she finished reading.

"Very well," Aben-Hamet replied with a bow, and when Rose went down to inform the landlady, the Arab disappeared.

She was not long in dressing, and in half an hour stood on the front stoop of the Lexington Avenue house ringing the bell.

The door was opened by a powerful colored woman, the ugliness of whose features was sufficient to startle one.

"Is yo' Miss Fairfield?" the woman inquired before Rose could think of what to say.

"That is my name," Rose answered. "I have——"

"Youse to com' rite upstairs."

"Is Mr. Walters severely hurt?"

"'Deed I can't say."

Rose entered the house.

The colored woman closed the door.

Then for the first time it dawned upon Rose that the hall and house were dark, and a feeling of fear crept over her.

But she bravely fought against giving way to it, and attributed the sensation to nervousness.

Putting on a brave face, she went after the woman upstairs.

The negress stopped in front of a center door on the second floor.

"Dey's in hyar," she said as she opened the door; "walk rite in, chile."

Rose hesitated on the threshold.

The next moment the negress caught her by the shoulders and gave her such a push that she flew into the room, as if she has been shot from a catapult.

Then the door was slammed to.

A key was turned in the lock.

Rose was a prisoner.

Rose Fairfield was a brave girl.

Now that she knew she was in danger, she did not go into hysterics like some women would have done.

She became calm and began to think of what she should do.

The room was small.

There were no windows and only one door.

An escape could only be made by the door.

Rose took in the situation at a glance.

"I must think of some way to get out of here," Rose ejaculated, as she stood by the table. "I must keep up my courage and not give way to fear."

Then she seated herself on the edge of the cot and began to think.

From the examination she had made she saw that the door was a heavy structure, and that it was locked from the outside.

It would be impossible for her to break this down.

"I must wait with patience," Rose murmured. "That is the only thing for me to do."

At the end of about two hours Rose heard some one outside the door.

Then the key was turned in the lock.

The door opened.

Aben-Hamet entered the room.

He closed and locked the door.

Rose arose and faced him, placing herself behind the table.

Instantly she recognized the Arab as the man who had delivered the note to her.

Aben-Hamet had changed his dress.

He was now attired in a long flowing brown robe bound with white silk, and a white turban surmounted his head.

His saturnine eyes sparkled as he looked at the beautiful girl before him.

A low cunning expression flitted across his face.

"You are the man who brought me that note," Rose exclaimed, when she saw that the Arab made no attempt to speak.

"You have sharp eyes, lady."

"I want to know why I have been brought here?"

"To learn to be a seeress."

"What?"

"The fates and stars directed me to you, oh, queen of beauty."

Aben-Hamet was acting.

Rose was astounded.

She thought the man was crazy.

"You seem amazed, fair lady," the Arab exclaimed, after a silence.

"I don't understand you," Rose replied.

If the man were crazy, she thought it would be best to humor him.

"I will explain," Aben-Hamet replied.

"I wish you would."

"The fates have decreed that you are to be a great seeress. The god, Protonto, ordered his servant, Aben-Hamet, to bring you here, and here you remain until you have reached that high state of perfection to which your soul aspires."

"You say the fates inspired you to bring me here?"

"They did."

"And I am to be your pupil?"

"You are."

"I have no objection to learning from such a great man as you are."

Aben-Hamet started.

Rose surprised him.

He had expected to find her in tears.

Instead he found her perfectly calm and collected.

If Aben-Hamet were acting a part, Rose also was doing the same.

She saw that so far she had succeeded well in deceiving the Arab.

If she played her cards right she might be able to get an opportunity to escape.

"You will become my pupil?" Aben-Hamet repeated, and he eyed Rose sharply.

"I shall be delighted. For years I have yearned to become learned in the mystic arts—to delve in the mysteries of Nature—to stand face to face with the Invisible—to read the future in the stars—and to be a grand priestess of the Fates," Rose exclaimed.

"Good, good!" Aben-Hamet cried out, and he rubbed his hands with glee. "Your great wish shall be gratified; you shall become versed in the mysticism of my country. The Fates have decreed well.

"During your novitiate," he continued, "you cannot leave this house."

"I am willing to remain here," Rose replied.

"I must leave you now. To-morrow I will see you again."

Aben-Hamet left the room.

"She does not suspect," he muttered. "There is a fortune in that girl, and I propose to make it."

How he intended to make the fortune he did not say.

But he appeared elated and sanguine of success.

"I've pulled the wool over his eyes," Rose exclaimed as the door closed behind the Arab.

Twenty minutes afterward the colored woman entered the room and placed before Rose Fairfield a sumptuous supper.

CHAPTER V.

NICK ON A STILL HUNT.

Nick Carter, when he made the discovery that Meg Cole's dive was closed, knew that Chick's escape had been discovered.

Looking through the window, the detective saw that everything had been removed from the den.

As long as the old hag had broken up her den, he knew that there would be no chance of finding Porter or the Arab there.

Would they attempt to communicate with Horace Willoughby?

If he had employed them to spirit Rose away, the detective argued, then they surely would either call upon him to inform him of their success, or send him word.

The best plan would be to watch the lawyer.

He had delegated Chick to do this; but now he was prepared to watch Willoughby himself, and Nick decided to send his assistant into Poverty Lane that night to look after the phantom.

Looking at his watch, Nick saw that it was not yet time for the factory to close.

It might be that Horace Willoughby was still there.

Thither the detective went.

Looking through the office window, Nick saw the lawyer seated at a desk talking with four men, whom he judged were employees.

Now that he had satisfied himself that Horace was there, the detective began to look around to see if Chick was in the vicinity.

As Nick Carter walked leisurely down the street a peculiar whistle was given.

Chick came out from behind a pile of lumber, crossing over to where the detective was standing.

"I see you are on deck," Carter exclaimed, when Chick came up to him.

"I have been here some time," Chick replied.

"Have you discovered anything?"

"No."

"Has Willoughby had any visitors?"

"None since I have been here."

"Chick, you can go to Poverty Lane."

"Now?"

"Yes."

"And drop this?"

"For the present."

"You will watch the lawyer?"

"I will."

"I am to look out for the phantom?"

"Only for to-night."

Nick gave his assistant instructions in regard to what he was to do.

He directed the young man not to attempt to intercept the so-called phantom, but to follow him and endeavor to discover his abiding place.

Chick hurried away.

Nick Carter was left alone.

He did not have long to wait on the corner before Horace Willoughby came out.

The lawyer was unaccompanied by anybody.

Nick got on the opposite side of the street and followed him.

Horace did not go toward the building where his office was, as the detective expected.

He turned up Park Row.

When he reached Baxter Street the lawyer hesitated on the corner for a time and then proceeded along that street.

After walking two blocks the lawyer halted in front of an old building in the basement of which was a saloon.

Horace did not enter the saloon.

He stepped into the hall on the side and started to go up the stairs to the second story.

Nick Carter entered the hall.

He waited until he heard the door close, and then cautiously proceeded to climb the rickety stairs.

Nick Carter flashed his dark lantern as he reached the second landing.

At the side of the stairway a door stood open.

The detective looked inside.

It was a closet.

In it was a ladder which ran up to the roof.

In the room opposite to the closet Nick heard some one pacing up and down.

He looked through the keyhole.

Horace Willoughby was the only occupant.

While Nick Carter was taking a view of the place, he heard some one enter the hall below and commence to ascend the stairway.

Quickly the detective stepped into the closet, and drew the door partly closed.

The one coming up the stairs was a man.

Upon reaching the landing he knocked on the door, after turning the knob and finding it locked.

"Who is there?" Willoughby called out.

"It is I," came in Jim Porter's voice.

The door was quickly opened.

Jim Porter passed into the room.

"What luck, Jim?" Horace Willoughby inquired.

"The best kind of luck," Porter exclaimed.

Porter then gave the lawyer a detailed account of how Rose Fairfield was led into the trap as he had learned it from the Arab.

"Then she suspects nothing?" Willoughby said.

"If Aben-Hamet is right in his judgment she has not the slightest suspicion," Porter replied.

"I am not so sure about that."

"Why?"

"Rose Fairfield is very shrewd, and she may be playing a part."

"That is so."

"A close watch must be kept upon her."

"That will be done."

"Is the negress with the Arab?"

"She is."

Horace Willoughby paced the floor for some time.

"What you have told me about your encounter with that fellow Chick annoys me not a little," the lawyer finally exclaimed. "It was well that Meg Cole closed up the joint."

"We will have to keep a watch upon Nick Carter."

"Not only a watch, my boy, but we must devise some means to get him out of the way."

"He is a cute one."

"Do you suppose that he suspects anything."

"I guess not."

"Did you read the evening papers?"

"No."

"There is a curious story in one of them."

"What is it?"

"It is an article about a so-called phantom which appears in Poverty Lane. The article states that the phantom is like my uncle."

"Impossible."

"It is worth investigating."

"The job was well done, and that body was his."

"I'm not sure."

"I have only Aben-Hamet to back me up in my statement, but I am positive we made no mistake."

"The night was dark."

"True."

"You might have mistaken some one for him."

"Not much. We watched him go into that house in Poverty Lane, and when he came out of the room and entered the back yard we set upon him."

"But this phantom."

"Some newspaper has learned that he was in the habit of visiting the rookeries, and it is trying to create a sensation."

"It is said that people have seen this phantom who leaves money and other things with those who are in need."

"Everything has been exaggerated."

Horace Willoughby and his companions were silent for some time.

Nick Carter had heard everything.

He was astounded.

From what the lawyer and Porter had said, there could be no doubt about there being a plot to put the millionaire out of the way.

It is true that the detective could have arrested them then and there, and started in to hunt for evidence afterward.

But Nick Carter did not do business in that way.

He concluded to let them go unmolested for a time.

By quietly following them up, in time he would be able to get at the bottom of the whole foul conspiracy.

If he closed in on them too quickly, he might not be able to learn where Rose was.

"When will you see Aben?" Horace finally asked.

"Not before to-morrow," Porter replied.

"Tell him to meet me here to-morrow night."

"At what hour?"

"Eleven o'clock. And try and find out something about this phantom and what Nick Carter is up to."

"I'll take a trip up to Poverty Lane to-night."

"Do your best."

"I will."

Horace Willoughby left.

Nick Carter did not follow him.

The detective waited.

It was his intention now to track Porter.

Half an hour afterward, the detective stood outside of the house.

Porter came out.

Nick Carter followed.

The burglar went direct to Poverty Lane.

He entered one of the houses in the middle of the row.

It was on the north side of the street.

Porter rapped on the door of a back room.

He was admitted.

Nick Carter crept up to the door.

He looked through a crack in the panel.

The room was packed full of things.

A lamp was burning on a table.

There was only a small vacant place.

An old woman was seated at the table.

Nick recognized her.

It was Meg Cole.

"Have you fixed things?" old Meg croaked in a shrill voice.

"The boss will see you to-morrow night downtown," Jim Porter replied.

"He must do the right thing."

"You can talk to him. But, Meg, what have you learned about this phantom?"

"All I know is that it is raising Cain up here."

"Have you seen it?"

"No."

"Are the boys below?"

"Some of them are."

"I guess I'll go down and see them."

Porter lifted a trapdoor in the floor.

He descended a ladder, and Meg closed the door after him.

This was a revelation to the detective.

Here was the headquarters of a gang.

While Nick was thinking about what he should do, he felt a tug at his elbow.

As quick as a flash he had grasped his revolver.

Before he could use it a voice had exclaimed in a low whisper:

"Oh, don't shoot."

It was Chick.

Nick Carter lowered his weapon.

"How did you find me out?" the detective whispered.

"I saw you come in," Chick answered. "Come with me. I've got the phantom locked up in a room in the house across the street."

CHAPTER VI.

A DESPERATE STRUGGLE.

Nick Carter followed Chick out.

"You have the phantom locked up?" Nick exclaimed, when he and Chick stood outside

"I have," Chick answered.

"How did you catch him?"

"I saw him come into the lane ten minutes ago."

"After I entered?"

"Yes."

"Did he come in a buggy?"

"No."

"What did he do?"

"He looked around him cautiously, and then went into a room where a sick man was and spoke in low whispers."

"Did you hear what they said?"

"No."

"What then?"

"He came out and went into a vacant room in the front of the house, leaving the key, with which he unlocked the door, on the outside. I instantly turned the key in the lock and rushed over to tell you."

"Come, let us go in."

The two detectives walked into the house.

They went direct to the room.

The door was still locked.

Nick Carter turned the key and opened the door.

He flashed the light from his dark lantern into the room.

Chick uttered a cry of surprise.

The detective looked at his assistant.

"He is gone!" Chick exclaimed.

"Vanished," Nick Carter ejaculated.

"The door was locked."

"True."

"He did not get out by that way."

"That is quite certain."

"There is no other door in this room."

"I can't see any."

"The windows are closed."

"And locked on the inside."

"This is strange."

"Very."

Nick Carter walked about the room.

He sounded the walls.

All appeared to be solid.

The detective scrutinized the floor.

There were no signs of a trapdoor.

Again Nick sounded the walls.

He even looked into the fireplace and up the chimney.

He began to think that Chick must have made a mistake.

But he did not say so.

"Where is the room he first visited?" Nick asked, after some reflection.

"Next door," Chick replied.

"We will go in and see what the man has to say."

Upon leaving the room the detective locked the door and put the key into his pocket.

It was his intention to come back and make another search when he had time.

If Chick was right, there was a mystery about the room.

Chick led the way into the room which he claimed the phantom had first entered.

It was dark.

Nick Carter flashed his lantern over the room.

In a corner was a bed.

"There is no one here," the little man ejaculated.

The bed bore evidences of having been occupied.

Nick Carter stepped up to it.

Placing his hand on the sheets, he exclaimed:

"These sheets are warm."

"Where could the man have gone to?" Chick said.

"I can't tell."

"Like the phantom he has disappeared."

"That fellow is as slippery as an eel."

From what Chick said that he had seen, the man appeared sick in bed.

If he was sick how could he get out of the room so quickly?

Had the phantom, who had vanished from the next room, assisted him?

"What shall we do?" Chick asked, after he and Nick Carter had made a search of the room.

"You remain here and watch. Jim Porter and a gang have a rendezvous across the street, and I want to find out what they are up to," Nick said.

Nick left Chick on the watch for the phantom.

Again he entered the house into which he had tracked Jim Porter.

This disappearance of the phantom and the sick man annoyed him not a little.

How could he set a trap to catch the mysterious man?

Nick Carter was so busy thinking about the phantom that he was not quite as cautious as he was in the habit of being.

When he walked into the hall the detective stumbled over a mat, and fell against the stairway.

He made quite a noise.

Before he could gain his equilibrium some one caught hold of him by the shoulders and threw him down.

With a muttered curse the man fell on the detective.

Nick managed to turn over.

His antagonist, he found, was a powerfully-built man.

The man had the advantage.

He tried to catch the detective by the throat.

Nick fought him off, catching him around the arms.

Then with a turn the detective rolled over.

His opponent went under.

This infuriated the man.

He swore and fought like a demon.

The noise of the struggle was attracting the attention of the other inmates of the house.

Those on the upper floors looked over the banisters.

"Have yez th' phantim?" an old woman called out from above.

No one answered her.

Back and forth across the floor the detective and the man struggled.

Neither could see the other's face.

All was dark.

Who the man was Nick Carter had not the slightest idea.

Just then the door of the room in which the detective had seen Jim Porter enter opened.

Meg Cole pushed her head out.

In her hand she held a lamp.

"Take that lamp in!" the detective's antagonist roared.

Meg recognized the voice.

Instantly she obeyed.

Nick Carter heard a shrill whistle.

The hag had given the alarm.

He was on top of the man now.

There was great danger now for the detective.

Meg, he knew, had summoned the gang.

If he kept up the fight, the result would be that he would get the worst of it.

Nick Carter freed himself.

With the agility of an athlete, the detective sprang to his feet.

The man tried to pull him down.

Nick heard voices in Meg Cole's room.

There was no time to be lost.

The detective darted out of the house.

Quickly he ran across the street and disappeared in the hallway of the house in which he had left Chick.

He closed the door.

The man with whom he had been struggling did not reach the street until Nick Carter was out of sight.

Several men were with him.

"Which way did he go?" Jim Porter, who led the crowd, cried out.

"Down the lane," a woman replied.

Nick Carter stood in the hall.

Instantly he made a change in his disguise.

He heard the crowd going down the lane.

When they had passed the house the detective stepped out.

He mingled with the crowd.

In the lead he saw Porter and a tall man.

This he judged was the man with whom he had been struggling.

"I see nothing of him," Porter exclaimed, after he had looked up and down the street.

"Neither do I," the tall man rejoined.

"Do you know who he was?"

"I do not. I wish I did."

"You say he was very strong?"

"He was."

"Do you think that it could have been the phantom?"

"I do not."

"What was he up to when you discovered him?"

"About to snoop around the door of the room."

"Was he near the door?"

"No, but he was going toward it."

"Where were you?"

"Seated on the steps on guard."

"When you came out of the room you saw no one?"

"I did not."

"I——"

"Jim, let us talk this matter over inside."

Under the street lamp the detective got a good look at the fellow.

He recognized him as Meg Cole's bartender.

The crowd dispersed.

All the people except Porter and the other members of his crowd believed that the bartender's antagonist was the phantom.

The detective got near to Porter and the man when they were going back to the house.

"Let some one watch outside the door," the detective heard Jim Porter order.

"Can you think who the cove was?" the bartender asked.

"I think that I know."

"You do?"

"I do."

"Who was it?"

"Nick Carter."

"Impossible."

"I'm willing to gamble on it."

"Then the game is up."

They entered the house.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECRET PASSAGE.

Nick Carter found the front door guarded by a man who knew every one who lived in the house.

Therefore it was impossible for him to get in by that way.

He wanted to learn what Jim Porter and the others decided upon.

Now that the gang suspected he was around, he knew they would keep a sharp lookout.

How was he to escape them and find out what their plans were?

The detective thought of Chick.

He might be able to utilize him.

No sooner did the detective think of this than he started to get his assistant.

He went direct to the room where he had left the young man.

The door was closed.

Nick tried the knob.

It would not yield.

The door was locked.

The detective knocked.

No one opened the door.

"Chick!" Nick Carter called out.

No answer came.

"Chick!" he called again.

No response was given.

Nick went to the door of the next room.

He put the key into the lock.

The key would not turn.

It had worked all right before.

Why would it not unlock the door now?

It was strange.

Nick went to the back room.

He put his shoulder against the door.

With one push the detective broke in the door.

All was dark within the room.

Nick threw open the slide in his dark lantern.

Now he was able to see.

He heard a groan.

Looking in the corner of the room from which the groan came, the detective beheld a body.

One glance at that familiar form told him that it was Chick.

Immediately he stepped up to the spot and knelt down by the young man's side.

Chick was unconscious.

Nick Carter turned him over.

Blood spurted from a wound on the side of Chick's head.

The detective examined it.

It had been made by a blunt instrument.

Probably the butt end of a revolver.

Nick Carter lifted Chick up.

He placed him on the bed.

Going to the drain, he wet his handkerchief, and then, after wiping the blood away, he bandaged up the wound.

It was not a serious one.

Chick opened his eyes.

In a moment or so he recognized the detective.

"Is it you?" the young man asked as he caught hold of the detective's hand and tried to get up.

"It is I," Nick replied. "How did this happen?"

"I can hardly tell. I was seated in a chair with my face turned toward the door, standing ready to confront any one who might enter, when all of a sudden there was a footstep behind me, and the next instant a terrible blow was given me on the head."

"You saw no one enter?"

"No one came in the door."

"The blow was struck from behind."

"I can see no place where a person could hide."

"The door was locked."

"It was open while I was seated in that chair."

"The other room door is locked."

"You have the key."

"It will not unlock the door."

"Let us go and try again."

"Are you strong enough?"

"I am."

"Come, then."

They went to the door of the next room.

Nick Carter was forced to break it in.

The detective went over the floor.

Here he found no sign of a trapdoor.

Again he sounded the walls.

None of them gave a hollow sound.

All seemed to be solid.

"Well, this does beat me!" Nick ejaculated.

"And me, too," Chick rejoined.

"Let us go into the other room."

Back they went into the room where the young man had been so mysteriously assaulted.

Nick Carter turned the bed over.

He went over this room the same as he had done the front apartment.

The detective tried to see if he could discover a secret spring.

There was none so far as he could see on the side walls.

At last he knelt down by the fireplace.

This was of brick.

Each brick Nick Carter pressed down.

Then he pried up one of the bricks which was loose.

Only sand was beneath it.

He put it back into its place.

"Look at that curious center-piece in the mantel," Chick exclaimed, when Nick was about to get up.

The detective turned his eyes on the spot indicated by Chick.

It was the figure of a serpent coiling itself around a female who was clinging to a tree.

Nick Carter got up and examined the figure minutely.

His eyes sparkled, and after a moment he exclaimed:

"I think, Chick, that we have solved the mystery."

With that, Nick Carter pressed his finger on the eyes of the serpent.

They went back into the head.

A clicking noise was heard.

A door in the side wall opened.

The detective held up the light.

A passage was disclosed.

It ran along toward the front room.

Nick Carter looked in.

He saw no one.

He listened.

No noise was heard.

Softly the detective closed the door.

"Let us go into the next room," he said.

In the next room the detective pressed in the eyes of the serpent, which were like those of the figure on the mantel of the back room.

Another secret door opened.

The other end of the passage stood open before them.

A narrow spiral stairway led down.

"No wonder it was an easy matter for the phantom to escape," Chick remarked.

"That passage and stairway lead to the cellar," Nick Carter replied.

Then an idea occurred to him.

Might not this house be connected in some way with the house in which Meg Cole was domiciled?

Might there not be an underground passage leading under the street from one house to the other?

"I am going down, Chick," the veteran remarked; and a look of determination overspread his face. "You remain here on guard. If any one enters, use your revolver."

Nick Carter commenced to descend the spiral stairway.

When halfway down the detective stopped and listened. All was silent below.

He went on again. At last he reached the bottom. He stood in a vaulted chamber, which was filled with rubbish. A number of rats ran across the floor.

At the end was an iron door.

Nick Carter opened the door.

He held up the lantern, so that the light shone upon the place beyond.

Six stone steps led down into a vaulted passage. This was as dark as night. It ran out under the street.

Nick Carter knew now that he was right in his surmise.

He went down the steps and entered the vaulted passage.

With great care he walked. Not a sound of his footsteps could be heard.

At last he came to the end.

An iron door similar to the one at the other end of the passage stood before him.

For a moment the detective stood still, debating whether he should open the door and go any farther, when he heard a voice beyond.

Bending forward, Nick placed his ear to the door. In the room beyond he heard men's voices.

Quickly the detective drew the slide over his lantern. Now a light shone through the crack under the door.

Nick Carter stooped down and peered into the room.

The men could not be seen, but Nick got a glimpse of their feet. He counted them. Then he was aware that there were six men in the room. He could hear what they said.

Porter appeared to be the leader.

From what he could see the room was filled with boxes.

These men must have used this as a rendezvous for some time.

They had not built the secret passages. All the evidence showed that these passages had been put in while the houses were in the course of erection.

"As I was saying," the detective heard Porter exclaim, "that cove was Nick Carter."

"Do you think he has got onto anything, Jim?" a shrill voice asked.

"That is hard to say."

"Our plan will be to get another headquarters."

"I am not in favor of that. This place has lasted us and served us well for a long time. Here are all of our traps."

"Let us break up for the night."

"Is the door locked?"

"I'll see."

A man walked over to the iron door.

Nick Carter drew back.

An oath escaped the man. The detective heard it. He realized what had happened. All the men jumped to their feet.

"What is it?" Jim Porter demanded.

"The door is unlocked," the man replied.

Nick Carter waited to hear no more.

He knew that they would institute a search.

As quick as his legs could carry him, the detective ran along the passage in the dark.

Behind he heard the men. Looking back he saw the flame of a torch.

Nick Carter reached the door. Quickly he closed it. It took him but a minute to put the iron bar into place. When the men found their way blocked they would probably make a search of the house.

Nick Carter hurried up the spiral stairway. He reached the top. The secret door was closed.

Where was Chick?

What could have happened?

The detective had not examined this side of the door. He realized now that he should have done so before making a descent.

Not a second was to be lost. Something had happened to Chick.

Nick pulled out his dark lantern.

He threw the light upon the door.

No sign of a lock was to be seen.

It seemed as if he were like a rat caught in a trap.

Nick thought of the catch on the other side. He made a calculation as to about where it was. Then he walked to the spot. Every part of the masonry he scanned. His sharp eyes discovered two wires. They were partly concealed.

Below he heard the noise of the men pounding on the iron door.

Pulling the wires out the detective saw the door move, and then open.

Nick entered the room.

It was empty.

There was no sign of Chick any place around.

Into the next room the detective hurried.

It also was vacant.

There was no time now for speculation in regard to what had become of the young man.

While Nick Carter was worried, he left the room and started out of the house.

What he must do now was to find out what had become of Chick.

While he stood thinking he saw a figure dart into the lane.

It was making for the house.

Nick Carter uttered the signal.

The man stopped.

In an instant the detective was by the young man's side.

“I suppose you are angry enough to club me,” Chick said, when he saw that it was Nick Carter.

“Why did you disobey orders?” Carter demanded.

“I couldn’t help it. Let us walk, and I will tell you a strange story.”

The two detectives left Poverty Lane.

They reached the Bowery.

“Well, now, Chick, fire ahead,” Nick said when they began to walk slowly up town.

“You know when you left what your orders were?” Chick rejoined.

“I told you to shoot the first person who entered the room.”

“You had been gone but a few moments when I began to feel drowsy. A peculiar smell seemed to pervade the room. It was so overpowering that I could not move.”

“Did you see any one around?”

“I neither saw nor heard any one.”

“That was strange.”

“I endeavored to reach the window so as to get some fresh air. I thought that it might be gases arsing from the cellar below. I thought that you were in danger, and my whole aim was to recover so that I might aid you.”

“You reached the window?”

“No.”

“What then?”

“I lost consciousness.”

“You lost consciousness?”

“And when I recovered I found myself lying on the flat of my back on a cellar door outside a grocery store around the corner.

“When you recovered I suppose you started back for the lane?”

“Not immediately.”

“What did you do?”

“I felt something bulky in my pocket, and I put my hand in to see what it was.”

“And you found?”

“A large envelope.”

“Where is it?”

“Here.”

“You did not open it?”

“I had no right to.”

“Why?”

“I examined it and discovered that it was addressed to you, and there was a note on the outside telling me to deliver it to you.”

Nick Carter took the envelope.

He saw his name written across the face.

“Open it, Nick, and see what it is,” Chick exclaimed.

Nick Carter tore open one end of the envelope, and then he uttered a cry of surprise.

CHAPTER VIII.

ABEN-HAMET’S SURPRISE.

The detective could hardly believe his eyes. The envelope contained a large roll of bills. He counted them and found that there was just one thousand dollars.

The detective put the money into his pocket.

There was also a note, which he unfolded and read:

“To Nicholas Carter:

“Inclosed you will find one thousand dollars. Use this in aiding Rose Fairfield to expose the rascalities of the nephew and niece of Henry Willoughby. Stop interesting yourself in the Phantom of Poverty Lane, and devote all of your energies to securing evidence against these people, and the gang of thugs whom Horace Willoughby has employed. Do as you are directed, and, at the end, you will learn all that you desire to know about the

“Phantom of Poverty Lane.”

“That is a stunner!” Chick exclaimed, when Nick Carter finished reading the letter.

“I can’t make it out,” the detective rejoined.

“What are you going to do?”

“Leave him alone.”

“What!”

“I propose not to molest him for a time.”

“Why?”

“Because I think that he will help us.”

“Why should he?”

“That I can’t explain now.”

“Will you give up going to Poverty Lane?”

“No.”

“What will you do?”

“I shall pay very little attention to Poverty Lane. I will keep my eyes on the gang, but most of my time will be devoted to solving the mystery of the tobacco merchant’s disappearance.”

“You know that he was murdered by Porter and Aben-Hamet.”

“Yes, from Porter’s statement; but we must find evidence; and that evidence, Chick, must be so complete that we can show who put up the job.”

“The lawyer put up the job.”

“We feel confident of that; but where is our evidence?”

Nick and Chick walked along in silence until they reached Fourteenth Street.”

Both were busy thinking.

When Carter and his assistant halted at the corner, Nick said:

“Chick, I propose to give you a very important piece of work to perform.”

“What is it?” Chick inquired.

“I told you about the visit of Jacques Anton?”

“You did.”

“In the safe you will find a number of papers which he left with me.”

“And a photograph.”

“That is right.”

“What am I to do?”

“You will take those papers, read them over carefully, and then start out and see if you can discover what became of the woman.”

“That is going to be a big job.”

“And one that will require a great deal of care.”

“I will devote all of my time to it.”

“And keep me posted.”

Chick jumped on a car going downtown.

Nick Carter stood on the corner for quite some time.

While he had passed through a number of exciting adventures during the evening, he did not feel sleepy nor tired.

The case had taken a very peculiar turn.

Nick, from what he had learned, saw that a dastardly crime had been committed.

Now the question was how best to go to work to entrap the criminals.

Jim Porter, if arrested, Nick knew, would never squeal on his pals.

Time and again he had had experience with the rascal.

Aben-Hamet, if he found himself in a tight place, might be induced to turn State's evidence, but that was not very likely to happen.

Nick turned to go across town.

When the detective reached Broadway two men walked across the street in front of him.

Their backs were turned toward him, but the form of one seemed familiar.

Nick got up close to the men.

The one he saw was Horace Willoughby, and the other, as soon as the detective saw his face, he recognized as Sim Elvers.

"You have made no mistake about this, Sim?" Nick overheard Horace say.

"No, I have not," Sim rejoined.

"You were followed from the time you left the factory until you met Porter and left his place."

"Did you know the man?"

"No, but he was the same man whom I saw talking with Alan Walters."

"That hound is meddling with my affairs, and I will fix him."

"I intend to do it the very first chance I get."

"I wish you had warned me that I was being followed."

"I tried to get near you, but the fellow was always in the way."

"Let us go in and get a drink."

Horace Willoughby and Sim Elvers went into an all-night saloon on Sixth Avenue.

The detective entered the saloon also.

Sim and Horace were standing at the bar.

The place was crowded.

Therefore the chance of being detected by the men was small.

The side door of the saloon opened and a man came in at this moment.

Nick Carter saw the lawyer start back and utter an exclamation of surprise.

Then he demanded, with a furious oath:

"What are you doing here?"

"I came in to get a drink," Aben-Hamet replied, with a low bow.

The lawyer looked at the Arab.

He was astonished.

Heretofore Aben-Hamet had acted in his presence in the most servile manner. Now his demeanor approached to insolence.

Horace Willoughby's face became clouded.

"Let us step outside. I want to talk with you," he exclaimed, as he drew up close to the Arab.

"Wait until I get a drink," Aben-Hamet coolly rejoined.

"Cur, come out with me."

"Hold! What name was that you called me, Mr. Horace Willoughby?"

The Arab's eyes shone with a wild fire.

His face was livid, and he glared at the lawyer.

"Will you come out?" Horace hissed.

"No," Aben-Hamet replied; "not until I have had a drink."

With that the Arab wheeled around, left the lawyer and Sim, and strode up to the bar, where he ordered brandy.

Horace Willoughby was furious with rage.

But he did not dare to say anything more.

He strode out of the saloon. Sim went with him.

Nick Carter walked out leisurely and stood on the curb.

The lawyer and Sim were only a short distance away.

They were silent.

"There will be a falling out between these people yet," the detective muttered. "If Willoughby doesn't handle that Arab very carefully he will have trouble with him."

Aben-Hamet came out.

He was smoking a cigar.

With a swaggering walk he stepped up in front of the lawyer, and said:

"I will talk with you now, Mr. Willoughby."

"What is the meaning of this?" Horace Willoughby cried out.

"You needn't be so ferocious."

"Instead of greeting me as you did, you should have been pleased to see me, after all that I have done."

Horace Willoughby was silent.

He looked at the Arab, and noticed the smile which played around the corners of his mouth.

He and his two companions walked on across the street.

Nick Carter strolled behind.

"You have the girl?" Horace Willoughby inquired in a conciliatory tone.

He saw that it would do no good to quarrel with the Arab.

"Yes, I have the girl," Aben-Hamet rejoined, as he blew a cloud of smoke up over his head.

"You have done well," the lawyer remarked.

"Thanks, most noble lord."

"You have her at your house?"

"A safe prisoner."

"Will you take me over and let me have a look at her?"

"No; she might see you. She does not suspect."

"I don't understand, Aben."

The Arab told Horace all about his interview with Rose Fairfield, and when he finished the lawyer burst out laughing and exclaimed:

"She took you in nicely, Aben."

"Took me in!" the Arab rejoined. "No, no, it cannot be."

"Let me give you a bit of advice."

"What?"

"Don't let that girl outside of her room or any place near a window where she can give an alarm."

Aben-Hamet looked at Horace Willoughby in a peculiar way.

The lawyer noticed it and said:

"You don't believe that she has been playing a part?"

"I can hardly believe it," the Arab said.

"You will believe it in a very short time if you give her any privileges."

"Does she not believe in the mystic arts?"

"No more than you do."

"You are telling me this so as to make me treat her harshly."

"I am not. If you had heard her speak against all such things as I have, you would believe what I tell you."

"I——"

"I see how it is."

"What?"

"You are bewitched by her beauty."

"No, I am not."

"You cannot deny it."

"She is beautiful."

Horace saw the enthusiastic expression in the Arab's face.

He was right in his accusation.

Being an excellent judge of human nature, he was aware that if Aben-Hamet fell in love with Rose his plans might be frustrated.

"I'll get her out of his keeping as speedily as possible," Horace mentally exclaimed, and then he said aloud:

"Aben, I must see this girl to-night."

"What for to-night?" the Arab asked.

"Because I must force her to divulge to me a secret which she is in possession of, and if she does not tell us, our way to secure the fortune will be a hard one."

"I thought you had it."

"So I have, but I must keep it."

"Is there anything wrong?"

"I am afraid there is."

"What is it?"

"The girl knows of the existence of a will in her favor."

"Are you positive?"

"I am."

"We must get her to tell, but I will work her."

"No, I must see her."

"If she sees you, she will never tell anything."

"Well, then, you can see her alone, and I will wait in another room while you talk with her."

Horace could see that the Arab did not like this proposition.

He was sorry now that he had told him the false story about Rose being in possession of a secret, in regard to a will.

It had had an entirely different effect than what he had calculated.

Now he knew that Aben-Hamet, like all members of his race, was false.

After thinking some time, the lawyer decided to change his tactics.

He must get Rose out of the clutches of the Arab, and get rid of such a dangerous accomplice.

"Well, then, Aben," Horace said, after a silence, "I will not insist upon going home with you to-night."

"Very well," Aben replied.

"Meet me to-morrow evening at Porter's place. In the meantime, look out for the girl, and do not give her any privileges."

"I will be on hand."

"You are not angry?"

"Not in the least."

"I'm sorry I got so worked up."

"Don't mention it."

"We are going home."

"So am I."

At the corner the trio separated.

Horace and Sim started uptown.

Aben-Hamet waited on the corner, and watched them until they were out of sight.

"Ah," Nick Carter heard him exclaim when he started across the street, "she shall be mine—all mine! And when she is mine, she shall tell me the secret of the will; and then, Mr. Willoughby, you shall be my slave. Ha, ha, ha!"

So interested was Aben-Hamet in thinking about his plans that he did not see Nick Carter, who had crossed to the other side of the street and was tracking him.

The detective was elated over what he had heard.

There could be no doubt now but what there would be a grand falling out between the rogues.

Aben-Hamet hurried along, mumbling to himself and little dreaming that the famous sleuthhound was on his trail, and that a great surprise was in store for him when he arrived home.

Nick Carter kept his eyes on the Arab.

The detective was thinking of Rose, and how to rescue her from the clutches of the scoundrel.

Aben-Hamet reached the house on Lexington Avenue.

He rang the doorbell.

When he went out he had instructed the colored woman, whose name was Sarah Downs, to lock and bolt the door on the inside.

No one answered his summons.

"Curses on her head!" he muttered, and then gave the bell-knob a vigorous pull.

When Sarah did not open the door Aben-Hamet went down to the basement and rattled the shutters in front of the dining-room window.

Sarah did not answer even then.

"Can anything have gone wrong?" Aben exclaimed, and then, running up the front steps, he put his night-key in the lock and turned it.

The door opened.

Aben was now seized with fear.

He closed the door.

Nick Carter, who had been watching the Arab from the corner, wondered why the man acted so strangely.

Aben, as soon as he entered the house, began to call for Sarah Downs.

Rushing down into the dining-room, he discovered that Sarah was not there.

Then he hurried to the colored woman's room.

There he saw everything in confusion.

All of Sarah's clothing was gone, and the room was empty.

Aben-Hamet commenced to rave and swear like a crazy man.

He rushed to the room where Rose Fairfield had been confined.

It was empty!

"May my bones rot into dust! May my soul shrivel and be placed in torment," he cried out, and fell upon the bed, burying his face, and tearing his hair with his hands. "Allah! Allah! Allah!"

When this paroxysm wore off Aben-Hamet got up.

Upon his face was the expression of a demon.

His pearly-white teeth shone.

His eyes stood out from their sockets like two balls of fire.

"Sarah Downs shall die for this!" he hissed. "Willoughby was right. Fool, fool, that I have been! But now what shall I do? They may have gone to the police. I must look alive."

Aben-Hamet waited in the place no longer.

The thought that the police might have been notified terrified him.

Down the stairway the Arab bounded and flung open the front door.

As he rushed down the steps he ran into the arms of Nick Carter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SAFE BREAKERS.

Nick Carter was taken off his feet.

It was as if he had been struck with a cyclone.

The sudden appearance of the Arab was unexpected.

Over onto the sidewalk the detective tumbled.

He had no chance to catch hold of Aben-Hamet.

The Arab almost fell down.

Seeing the detective, he concluded that he was an officer and that his surmise was correct, that Rose had gone to the police.

With a cry, Aben jumped over Nick Carter and dashed off down the street with the fleetness of a frightened deer.

By the time the detective regained his feet, the Arab had disappeared around the corner.

Nick Carter had started up the front steps of the house, intending to try and get in when Aben-Hamet opened the door.

Not expecting that the Arab was going to appear, he was not prepared for any such onslaught.

Aben-Hamet had left the front door open.

"What can have frightened him so?" Nick Carter mused. "He ran as if a hundred fiends were after him."

It was of no use for the detective to attempt to follow the Arab, as he was a considerable distance away.

So Nick Carter entered the house.

He went through from basement to garret and found nothing.

"Rose is not here," the detective ejaculated. "She has either escaped or she has been spirited away by some one. That is the reason why Aben is so frightened."

"What can have become of Rose?"

Looking at his watch, he saw that the hour was late.

Notwithstanding the lateness of the hour he concluded to go to Rose Fairfield's boarding house.

Upon reaching the house on Washington Square the detective saw a bright light burning in the room which had been assigned to Rose.

He rang the doorbell.

It was the landlady who opened the door.

"Is it you, sir? Come in," the landlady exclaimed.

"Is Miss Fairfield here?" Nick Carter asked.

"Indeed she is, sir, up in her room."

"How long has she been here?"

"Ten minutes."

"Will you tell her that I am here and desire to see her?"

"Go right up to her room."

Nick Carter went up.

The woman followed him.

Upon entering the room the detective saw Rose lying upon a couch.

She was greatly exhausted and nervous.

The strain had told on her fearfully.

"Mr. Carter, is it you?" Rose exclaimed, as she raised herself up.

"Don't disturb yourself, Miss Fairfield," the detective replied, taking a seat by her side.

"I have gone through a terrible experience."

"I know that."

"I never want to encounter such another."

"Did you escape from the house on Lexington Avenue?"

"I did."

"Tell me how you succeeded in doing this?"

Rose gave a graphic description of her escape. It seemed that when the colored woman, Sarah Downs, had brought in the supper she was very much intoxicated and, sitting down, went to sleep. She had left the door open, and Rose managed to escape from the house.

Nick Carter told her what he knew, and how frightened the Arab was.

When he concluded the detective said:

"They must not learn that you have escaped."

"How can we prevent it?" Rose inquired.

"Aben-Hamet will think that Sarah Downs has taken you away, if he cannot discover that you have returned here."

"Do you think he will come here to look after me?"

"He will when his fright wears off."

"What shall I do?"

"Do you feel strong enough?"

"For what?"

"I want you to leave here with me."

"To-night?"

"Yes."

"Where will you take me?"

"Have you no friend who lives out of town?"

"I have a friend in Newark."

"You can go to her house for a few days. And, madam"—turning to the boarding house keeper—"if any one calls for Miss Fairfield you must state that you know nothing about her."

"I will do anything you say, sir," the woman replied.

"Do you think that Aben-Hamet will come here?" Rose asked.

"I do," Nick Carter answered.

"What about Alan?"

"I will see him."

"Had he not better leave the city also?"

"I think not."

"He will be in constant danger."

"No, he will not."

"Tell him I say he must not go out."

"I will, but I am afraid that he will not obey. Now if you are ready, Miss Fairfield, we will go."

"I am ready."

When Nick Carter and Rose were well on their way to the ferry, the detective said:

"Did Mr. Willoughby ever tell you about your parents?"

"He never told me anything," Rose answered.

"You don't know whether he had any documents relating to your birth?"

"I do not."

Nick Carter saw Rose to the house of her friend in Newark.

When he returned to the city it was daylight.

The first thing he did was to see Alan Walters.

He told the young man what had happened.

Alan, of course, was elated.

"What will be the next move?" Alan asked, when the detective concluded talking.

"I have not decided yet," Nick answered.

"Can I do anything?"

Nick Carter thought.

He had been turning over in his mind a plan.

"You were very intimate with Mr. Willoughby?" the detective finally said.

"No one could have been closer to him than I was," Alan rejoined.

"Did he ever talk to you about Rose Fairfield?"

"Only that he intended to leave her the greater portion of his money."

"Did you know the combination of his private safe?"

"You mean the one at the mansion?"

"I do."

"I know the combination of that."

"Of any other?"

"Those in the office."

"If the combination of the safe at the mansion has not been changed, I am going to open it."

"You are going to the house?"

"Yes. I want to search the safe."

"I will give you the combination. It is 3—10—36."

"I will work it."

"When will you go to the house?"

"Now."

"What shall I do?"

"You disguise yourself and go to Washington Square. I want you to watch the boarding house and note who calls."

"And then?"

"If any one calls inquiring for Rose, find out where he goes to."

"I will do it."

"Don't run any risk."

"No."

"I guess that will be all."

Nick Carter left Alan.

It was yet early.

When he arrived at the Willoughby mansion the detective noted that no one was up.

With a skeleton key he opened the front door.

Then he entered the house.

Never had Nick Carter been in the house before.

But from the description given to him by Rose and Alan, he knew where the library was.

Now the question was whether Horace Willoughby had succeeded in opening the safe and changing the combination.

If he had, then Nick would not be able to do anything.

The detective entered the library. He closed and locked the door. Then he raised the window. It was only a few feet from the ground, and had heavy shutters in front of it.

These Nick unlocked and pushed open. He did this so that he would have an avenue of escape if any one should come to the door.

The safe was in a corner. The doors were closed.

Nick Carter approached it, and started in to try the lock.

Dexterously he shot the knob back and forth.

It turned all right. The combination had not been changed. Click went the lock. Nick Carter turned the handles. The bolts shot back. With a vigorous pull the doors opened. He started back. The safe was empty.

Nick Carter could hardly believe his eyes.

According to Alan Walters' statement, the millionaire had the safe full of private papers and documents.

What had become of these? Had Horace Willoughby succeeded in getting into the safe? Had he removed the contents?

Nick looked into all the compartments. In none of them could he see the least sign of a scrap of paper.

In disgust the detective closed the doors of the safe.

He unlocked the library door.

Again he closed the shutters and pulled down the window.

After all his trouble he had learned nothing.

Nick was about to leave the room when he heard some one coming down the stairs.

Thinking it was one of the servants, the detective stepped back into the library, behind the portières in front of the window.

He was none too soon.

A man entered the library.

In the dim light Nick could not make out who it was.

The man did not open the window. He closed and locked the door. Then he lighted the gas.

Nick saw that it was Horace Willoughby.

He was in his shirt sleeves.

In his hand he held a small bag.

This the lawyer opened, and a fine kit of burglar's tools was displayed.

Horace Willoughby spread the tools out on the desk.

From the lot he selected a cold-steel auger and bit. Then going up to the safe he examined the lock, and proceeded to bore a hole alongside of it.

Nick Carter knew now that Horace Willoughby did not know the combination of the safe.

The lawyer was going to break into it.

While Horace was at work upon the safe, Nick noticed that he used the tools with great expertness.

At last Horace had bored a hole by the side of the lock. Into this he put a small piece of dynamite. This he hit with a small chisel.

There was a muffled explosion.

The dynamite had done its work well.

The bolts had been blown out of their sockets.

Horace pulled open the door and looked in.

Then a cry escaped him. He saw that there was nothing in the safe.

"Empty!" he gasped. "What does this mean?"

The lawyer had turned pale.

For a long time he stood contemplating.

"He always kept all of his papers here," Horace Willoughby mused aloud. "Could Rose have had the combination and removed the papers?"

This thought seemed to madden the lawyer.

He paced back and forth across the room, swearing furiously.

"Curse her!" he cried out. "If she took those things—those papers, I'll wring from her what she has done with them. Among them are those checks and that confession. Curse her! My God! Can she have given those things to Nick Carter?"

The thought seemed to agitate him greatly.

Nick watched the lawyer closely.

Nick tried to think what this confession could contain. It evidently related to something which the lawyer had done and which his uncle had held the proof of.

"I must find out who has those documents!" Horace Willoughby cried out, as he jumped to his feet. "I must get them. I will see Rose to-day, and force a confession from her. If that detective has them, I will kill him."

Horace Willoughby hurried from the library.

He took the key with him and locked the door on the outside.

No sooner was the lawyer out of the room than the detective opened the window shutters and got out.

From what Horace had said, Nick guessed that he would start immediately for downtown, and he was right.

In ten minutes Horace Willoughby came out of the house.

His pace was more of a run than a walk.

Nick Carter followed the lawyer to Jim Porter's rooms.

Nick waited outside.

He was on the corner when the lawyer and Jim Porter came out of the house.

They went direct to the house on Lexington Avenue, with Nick Carter close on their trail.

The detective watched them as they ascended the steps of the house.

They saw that the front door stood ajar and entered.

In a few moments they came out.

Horace and Porter were excited.

They walked up to the corner where Nick was standing.

So worked up were they that they did not pay any attention to the detective.

"The cur!" Horace Willoughby exclaimed. "He is up some scurvy trick."

"Something may have happened," Jim Porter replied.

"What could happen?"

"Nick Carter."

"I never thought of him."

"Could he have found out where the girl was?"

"I think not."

"Then the Arab has taken her somewhere."

"And Sarah Downs is gone also."

"Let us go back to my rooms."

"You go there and wait. I'll take a run over to the factory and will meet you in an hour."

"If the Arab turns up I will hold him."

"Hold him? Yes, choke him to death if he does not tell you what he has done with Rose Fairfield."

The men separated.

Nick Carter did not follow then.

He waited until they were out of sight.

Then he went over to Washington Square.

Nick Carter wanted to see if Alan was on the watch.

Aben-Hamet, the detective judged, would not present himself to the others until he had learned what had become of Rose.

If the lawyer and Porter had known that Rose had escaped they would have been more worried than they were.

But they did not know this.

And Nick Carter decided that, if he could prevent it, they should not learn of it.

The detective, when he reached Washington Square, looked around for Alan.

He saw a man seated on a bench in the square.

He walked over, and when he came within a few feet of him he saw it was Alan.

"What success, Alan?" the detective asked.

"Look over on that corner," Alan Walters replied.

"I see a man over there."

"He has been standing there ever since I have been here."

"What has he been doing?"

"Watching the house?"

"How do you know that he is watching the house?"

"I saw him stop one of the servants and question her."

"Do you know what he said to the girl?"

"I do not."

"Well, Alan, that man is Aben-Hamet."

CHAPTER X.

THE ARAB'S CONFESSION.

"Aben-Hamet!" Alan Walters ejaculated, when he recovered from his surprise.

"Yes; he is disguised," Nick Carter rejoined.

"What do you propose to do?"

"You wait here and see."

The detective arose from his seat.

Alan watched him.

Nick strolled off along one of the side paths and made a detour of the park. All this time he kept his eyes upon the man on the corner.

The Arab did not see him.

Nick crossed the street and came up behind Aben-Hamet.

For a moment the detective paused.

Then he laid his hand upon the Arab's shoulder, clutching it tightly, and exclaimed:

"Aben, what are you doing here?"

"Oh! Ah!" the Arab ejaculated.

He turned an ashen hue.

"You have not answered my question," Nick said, when Aben-Hamet gave him no reply.

"My name is not what you call it," the Arab yelled, when he had partly recovered his composure.

"Do you deny that you are Aben-Hamet, the Arabian seer?"

"I know no such person."

"And you are not disguised, I suppose you will tell me next?"

"I guess you are mistaken."

"Am I, Aben?"

Nick Carter, as he asked this question, pulled off the false wig which the Arab wore.

"Who are you?" Aben-Hamet cried, as he endeavored to jerk away from the detective.

"You have not recognized me," the detective replied.

"No, I have not."

"Do you know an individual by the name of Nick Carter?"

Aben-Hamet commenced to tremble.

His legs shook and his teeth began to chatter.

"You know who I am," Nick remarked.

"What do you want with me?" Aben-Hamet asked.

"What have you done with Rose Fairfield?"

"I know no such person."

"Come, come, Aben, it was you who enticed her to the house on Lexington Avenue."

"I—I——"

"You cannot deny it."

"I know nothing."

"You will come with me to police headquarters."

"You are going to lock me up?"

"I am."

"On what charge?"

"Murder."

"Murder! Whose?"

"The murder of Henry Willoughby."

Aben-Hamet staggered back against the lamp-post.

He was like one stricken with paralysis.

Alan Walters came up.

He had heard the detective's accusation.

"Shall I call a cab?" the young man asked.

"I think you had better," Nick replied.

Alan went off.

Aben-Hamet stood staring at the detective.

"You charge me with the murder?" he said, in a whining tone.

"I do," Nick replied.

"I did not do it."

"You did not commit the murder alone, but you assisted Jim Porter."

"You have no proof."

"Oh, yes, I have."

"Is Porter under arrest?"

"No."

"Is your evidence complete?"

"Why do you ask?"

"I will help you."

"You will help me?"

"Yes. I will turn State's evidence."

"What good will that do you?"

"You will not be so hard on me then."

"How do you know?"

"You will need my evidence to secure a conviction."

"How do you know?"

"I know it."

"You will confess?"

"I will."

Nick Carter had decided not to take the Arab to police headquarters, notwithstanding the fact that he had led Aben-Hamet to believe that he intended to do so.

Alan had returned with the cab.

The detective gave the driver the address of his office, and ordered him to take him there.

When they were all seated in the detective's office, Nick Carter placed a pad of paper in front of Alan, saying:

"Write down all that this fellow has to say."

Alan prepared to write, and then the detective turned to Aben-Hamet, and said:

"Aben, now you can tell me all about this affair."

"Horace Willoughby is at the bottom of the whole conspiracy," Aben-Hamet replied.

"How is that?"

"He is the chief of a gang of the most expert thieves in the country."

"Come now, Aben."

"You do not believe me?"

"Hardly."

"For several years Jim Porter has been his lieutenant. He has planned all the robberies, and the men have carried them out. When they would get into trouble he would defend them. Once in a while when the 'graft' was rich he would take part in it himself."

"You mean that he is the leader of this gang?"

"I do."

"It is wonderful that the police have never suspected him."

"It is because he held such a position in society."

"Does his sister know of this?"

"No."

"Did his uncle?"

"His uncle suspected him. The old man discovered some months ago that his name had been forged to a number of checks. He caught Horace red-handed, and made him confess."

"Ah!"

"Jim Porter was implicated in the affair; but old Willoughby would not prosecute them on account of the talk it would create. After this Horace Willoughby heard that the old man had made his will in favor of Rose Fairfield. Old Willoughby left the will in his safe at his office."

"Well?"

"Horace got Sim Elvers to steal it, and then he set out to have his uncle murdered so that he could get the estate."

"He employed you and Jim Porter?"

"I was a member of the gang, and when he selected me I could not refuse to act."

"How was the murder committed?"

"The old man had been in the habit of visiting Poverty Lane. One of the rendezvous of the gang is there. It was decided that Porter and I should waylay him [illegible] that we should throw his body into the river."

"You talked over the matter with Porter?"

"Yes, we talked it over in the underground room of the rendezvous."

"Then you attacked the old man?"

"It was a dark night. We sent him a note, purporting to be signed by one of the people living in the lane, asking him to call immediately, as the writer was dying. He entered the lane. Porter jumped on him, knocked him down and killed him."

"You did not help?"

"I did not strike a blow."

"What did you do?"

"I helped to carry the body to the river front."

"Were you and Porter alone when you carried the body to the river front?"

"We were."

"After the murder, then, Horace Willoughby decided to get Rose Fairfield out of the way?"

"He did."

"Rose was too smart for you, Aben?"

"Did she escape?"

"She did."

"And the negress did not help her?"

"She did not?"

"Does Sarah Downs know about these plans?"

"She was at the rendezvous and heard them all talked over."

"Do you know where I'd be likely to find her?"

"I do not. She will not dare to go to the den in Poverty Lane."

"Why?"

"She will be afraid."

"Of you?"

"Not so much of me as of Horace Willoughby."

Nick Carter stopped questioning the Arab.

"I have it all down," Alan Walters said, when the detective lolled back in his chair.

"Let Aben-Hamet sign it," Nick rejoined.

The Arab took the pen.

At the bottom of the paper he affixed his signature.

Nick arose from his desk.

He walked to the side of the room.

He pressed his hand against the wall, and a secret door opened.

A number of bars confronted the detective.

From his pocket he took a key, which he placed in a lock and opened the barred door.

"Aben-Hamet, you will step into this room," Nick ordered.

"What is this?" the Arab asked, in amazement.

"It is a private cell. Here you will be safe."

"Are you not going to take me to police headquarters?"

"Not for the present."

"Why not?"

"Because I don't see fit."

"You have no right to lock me up here!"

"I may not have the right, but I propose to do it, all the same."

"If I refuse to go into that room, what then?"

"Do you refuse?"

"I do."

"Then you go in."

Nick Carter caught the Arab up in his arms.

In vain Aben-Hamet struggled to free himself.

The detective carried him into the barred room, and placing him in a chair, said:

"Now, Aben, you see what I am capable of doing."

"Curse you, dog!" Aben-Hamet hissed.

"Curse away."

Nick Carter withdrew.

He locked the cell door.

There was no chance for the Arab to escape.

"I had no idea you had any such arrangement here as that," Alan Walters remarked, when the detective resumed his seat and wiped the perspiration from his brow.

"I find it very handy at times," Nick rejoined. "Some years ago I had it built, and it has held many noted criminals."

"Do you believe the Arab's story?"

"You mean about Willoughby?"

"Yes."

"I do."

"What are you going to do?"

"Now I am going to solve the mystery surrounding the Phantom of Poverty Lane, and then close in on Willoughby and the gang."

"What has the phantom to do with this case?"

"A good deal."

"I can't see how."

"You will when the case is ended."

"You are a queer man, Mr. Carter."

"So people think."

"Are you going to leave Aben-Hamet in that room without any one to watch him?"

"No."

"What then?"

"I am going to constitute you his keeper. You will remain here on watch until I return."

"I will obey."

"If any one calls don't open the door."

"I will not."

"I will lock you in, and the only one who can enter besides myself is my assistant, Chick."

Nick Carter departed.

Alan Walters took up a position at the window and proceeded to amuse himself by reading a paper.

It was the detective's intention to see if Jim Porter and the lawyer met in the room on Baxter Street, find out what they intended doing, and then go to Poverty Lane.

The peculiar actions of the so-called phantom puzzled him not a little.

The phantom had an interest in the millionaire who had so mysteriously disappeared, and who, the Arab confessed, had been murdered. Why should he be interested in the case? Was he a friend of Henry Willoughby?

Nick Carter reached the house where Jim Porter resided.

He went up to the burglar's rooms.

The door stood open.

The place was deserted.

All the furniture had been taken away.

"Mr. Porter has moved," a woman who lived on the next floor said, when she saw the detective looking into the room.

"How long since?" Nick inquired.

"About an hour ago."

"Did he say where he was going to move to?"

"Sure, he did not."

There was no use to remain longer in the place, so the detective took his departure.

The burglar had probably gone into hiding, Nick concluded.

Had Horace Willoughby done the same?

If it were true that he was the master spirit of the gang, then he had probably thrown his fortune in with the gang.

Nick went direct to Poverty Lane.

He had assumed another disguise, and when he entered the house in which the gang had their rendezvous, he had no fear of being recognized.

Nick walked boldly up to the door of the room in which he had last seen Meg Cole, and knocked.

No one opened the door.

Nick looked into the room.

It was empty.

He went across the street into the house where he and Chick had discovered the secret passages.

The rooms were just as Chick and he had left them.

The detective opened one of the doors.

He hurried down the spiral stairway, then along the passage until he came to the door which opened into the vault where he had seen Porter and the gang.

Nick listened outside the door.

He heard nothing.

Peering into the vault, the detective discovered that it was dark.

No one was there.

The gang had moved.

Where was this place on the river front that Willoughby had spoken about?

Nick tried to think.

He wanted to recall if he had ever been at a rendezvous near Fiftieth Street.

This was where Porter had said the place was.

The detective was familiar with a number of thieves' dens along the North and East Rivers, but he could not remember any near Fiftieth Street.

He returned to the street.

From the appearance of things it would seem that Meg Cole had gone with them.

The detective seated himself upon a cellar door.

He intended to watch the house for a time and think over his work.

Children ran in and out of the court, and men and women passed, but none of them paid any attention to the detective.

While Nick was busy thinking, he felt something strike him on the head.

A ball of paper dropped into his lap.

The detective looked up, but he could see no one.

Nick picked up the paper, and as he spread the slip out on his knee, he exclaimed:

"It is a note, and it is in the handwriting of the phantom; and it is addressed to me."

The instant the detective made this discovery, he picked the note up and read:

"NICHOLAS CARTER: The gang have moved to a retreat at the foot of East Forty-ninth Street. You enter under the wharf. PHANTOM OF POVERTY LANE."

Nick sprang to his feet.

In vain he looked around him for the mysterious man who had thrown the note into his lap.

From this it would appear that the phantom had followed the gang to the new rendezvous, else how would he know where it was situated?

Nick was pleased and at the same time annoyed.

He was pleased to receive the information in regard to the rendezvous of the gang, and chagrined to think that his disguise had been penetrated.

The phantom, whoever he was, must have had the eyes of a hawk.

If he were able to penetrate the disguise, then Nick thought the gang might be able to do the same thing.

If he went up to the retreat he must change his disguise.

The paper had been thrown out of one of the windows of the house in front of which the detective had been seated.

Before starting for the retreat, the detective decided to make a tour of the house and make some inquiries of the tenants.

Nick started at the top and worked down to the bottom.

He saw, as he thought, every one in the house.

Nearly all of them were women.

None of them had seen the phantom.

None of the men in the house answered to the description of the mysterious man.

Concluding that it was useless to waste any more time here for the present, the detective left the court.

He would return to his office, change his disguise, and then go up to the retreat.

CHAPTER XI.

"SHOOT THE TRAITOR!"

Alan Walters became interested in the paper he was reading, and he did not notice how the time passed.

Neither did he hear a whispered conversation which had been going on in the hall for some time.

Suddenly he was startled by a loud knock on the door.

He took two steps forward.

Then he remembered the detective's injunction and stopped.

Again the knock was repeated.

Now Alan heard voices without.

"No one is inside, Jim," Alan heard a man's voice exclaim.

The young man thought that he recognized that voice.

"Here goes," the man's partner replied.

The next instant a heavy body was thrown against the door.

Alan realized that they proposed to break in.

What should he do?

He felt in his pocket.

His pistol was gone.

He remembered that he had left his revolver on his dressing-case that morning.

Was there a pistol about the office?

Alan began to look.

Again the man threw himself against the door.

The lock flew off.

Alan sprang back.

He grabbed up a club.

When he turned around the two men were in the room.

"Horace Willoughby," Alan Walters exclaimed, when he turned and recognized the lawyer, "what is the meaning of this?"

"None of your business," Willoughby answered, with a fierce oath, and sprang toward Alan.

Jim Porter closed the office door.

Alan raised his club and dealt the infuriated lawyer a blow on the arm.

This only aroused him the more.

Porter also approached Alan.

The young man put his back to the wall.

He wielded his club back and forth.

For a time Porter and the lawyer held back.

Then the burglar drew a long knife, and the lawyer a revolver.

In leaning against the wall Alan had unconsciously pressed against the spring which opened the hidden door to the cellroom.

It flew open.

"What is this?" Porter cried out in amazement.

"Hello! There is Aben-Hamet within!" Willoughby ejaculated, as he looked into the cell.

The Arab was crouching down in a corner.

He had recognized the voices of his pals.

Fear had seized him.

"Hold that door open!" Willoughby ordered.

Porter placed a chair against it.

Alan, in the interval, had made a dash toward the hall door.

Willoughby saw this move.

He raised his revolver and fired.

The ball hit Alan in the left leg.

With a groan he fell to the floor.

Jim Porter jumped on top of him.

The scoundrel's face was livid with rage.

Alan endeavored to get up.

Porter hit him a blow on the head.

It stretched out the young man senseless.

"That settles him," Porter cried out, as he arose to his feet.

"Now we will deal with this cur," muttered Willoughby, with an oath.

He turned toward the cell where Aben-Hamet stood shivering.

"How came you here, Aben?" Horace inquired, as he walked up to the door of the cell.

"Nick Carter brought me here," the Arab replied, coming forward.

He knew the desperate character of the men, and he was aware that if they discovered he had squealed upon them it would go hard with him.

Therefore, he concluded that it was best to tell them some kind of a story.

"How did he bring you here?" the lawyer demanded.

"He broke into the house on Lexington Avenue and surprised me," Aben replied.

"And Rose?"

"He took her away."

"You let him?"

"How could I help it?"

"You could have shot him."

"Not much."

"Why not?"

"I did not see him until he had me down on the floor and the handcuffs on my wrists."

"Where was Sarah Downs?"

"When she saw the detective she made a break for the basement door and escaped."

"How long have you been here?"

"Ever since an hour after I left you last night."

"Did he follow us last night?"

"I think he did."

Horace Willoughby became silent.

He fastened his eyes upon the Arab and began to study his face.

Aben-Hamet moved about uneasily.

"Break open the door and let me out," Aben said when the silence became unbearable to him.

"You have been false to us, Aben-Hamet," Horace Willoughby exclaimed.

"I have not."

"I can read it in your eyes."

"I swear."

"What is an oath to you?"

"As much as it is to you."

"You have confessed."

"I have not."

"Why are you locked in here?"

"Because I would not confess."

"That is not the reason."

"What is it, then?"

"It is because you made a confession to Nick Carter, and he was afraid that if he locked you up at police headquarters we would hear of it."

"You are wrong."

"I think I am right."

"You are not."

"Well, we will see."

"What are you going to do?"

"Search this place."

"Why?"

"For papers."

"You think I made a confession?"

"I do."

"And that it is written down?"

"That is it exactly."

"You will find out that you are wrong; make your search."

Aben-Hamet calculated that Nick Carter had taken his confession with him.

He was certain that the detective had not left it in the office.

If Porter and Horace Willoughby found nothing, they would believe him, and he would gain his liberty.

The instant that he was free the Arab determined to make tracks for some foreign country.

Porter and the lawyer were prosecuting the search.

They opened an old-fashioned safe.

Nothing was in it.

"Let us look through the desk," Porter suggested.

"It is strange that he has none of those papers around," the lawyer remarked.

"Perhaps he doesn't keep any valuable documents here."

"That may be so."

"Let's go through the desk at all hazards."

Willoughby pulled open the top drawer.

The first thing that met his eyes was the document that Alan Walters had written.

The ink was still fresh.

Willoughby's experienced eyes noticed this.

He picked up the paper.

Aben-Hamet saw him do it.

The Arab knew what the paper was.

He stood trembling for a moment.

Then he reached forth his hand and endeavored to pull the chair away from the door.

If he could get the hidden door closed then he might be safe.

Porter and the lawyer would not be able to find the spring.

Just as the Arab's hand grasped the back of his chair Horace Willoughby looked up.

He read the indorsement upon the back of the confession.

There was a dangerous light in his eyes.

He saw what Aben-Hamet was about to do.

He sprang forward.

He planted a well-directed blow between the Arab's eyes.

Aben-Hamet howled with pain as he fell to the floor.

The lawyer held the door open.

Jim Porter was surprised.

"What is it?" Porter asked, as he stopped searching and came up.

"It is a confession," Horace Willoughby replied, as he opened it.

"Made by Aben-Hamet?"

"Yes, by this traitor."

"It is false," Aben whined, as he staggered to his feet and wiped the blood from his face.

"Oh, no, it is not," Willoughby retorted.

"Read it," Porter said.

"Listen, and you will see that we are in great danger."

"We will kill the cur."

"That is our only salvation."

Horace Willoughby read the confession through.

Then he tore it into a thousand fragments, swearing all the time he was doing it.

He scattered the pieces about the room.

With great coolness he examined his revolver.

"What are you going to do?" Porter asked.

"Shoot the traitor," was Willoughby's reply.

"The sound of the pistol shot will attract attention."

"One shot would do the work, and then we must get out. Stand up, Aben-Hamet."

"Have mercy," the Arab whined.

"Mercy to a traitor? Never!"

Then Horace Willoughby took aim and fired.

Aben-Hamet uttered a scream.

He fell face downward on the floor.

"Let us go," Jim Porter called out.

The burglar was frightened.

Not so with Horace.

He showed not the least sign of fear.

His face wore an expression of grim determination.

Putting his revolver into his pocket, he said:

"Jim, we must not be in too great a hurry. We must walk out of this building as if nothing had happened."

The two men left the office, and succeeded in leaving the building without encountering any one.

CHAPTER XII.

CHICK'S DISCOVERY.

When Nick Carter reached the office he was surprised to find the door open.

He entered and stumbled across the body of Alan Walters.

If the detective had been five minutes sooner he would have met the men on the stairs.

The hidden door had closed.

Nick saw the confusion that the room was in, and knew now that a struggle had taken place.

The detective examined the young man, and thought that he saw signs of ife.

Some one came into the room.

Nick looked up and saw Chick.

"Run quick for a doctor!" the detective exclaimed.

"What has happened?" Chick asked.

"Get the doctor!"

Chick ran out.

In a few minutes the young detective returned with a physician, who had an office on the first floor of the building.

He commenced an examination of Alan.

"Is he dead, doctor?" the detective inquired.

"He is alive," the doctor replied.

"Thank God!"

Alan opened his eyes.

He looked around in bewilderment.

Then he recognized the detective.

"He must be taken to the hospital or to his home," the detective said.

"Take me home, Mr. Carter," Alan murmured, in a weak tone of voice. "Send for Rose."

"You must not exert yourself," the doctor admonished.

"One question, doctor," Nick Carter said.

"Well, then, one question, but no more."

"Alan, was it they?"

"Yes," Alan replied, and was going to say more, when the detective held up his hand and stopping him, said:

"That is all I want to know. I will send for an ambulance and have you taken to your home. Then I will telegraph for Rose Fairfield."

Chick had gone for an ambulance, which soon arrived, and they put Alan into it.

Nick Carter gave the driver and surgeon instructions about how they were to treat Alan, and then he returned to the office.

During the excitement over the finding of Alan Walters wounded, Nick did not think about the Arab.

When he entered the office after the ambulance had gone, he opened the door in front of the cell.

Chick was by his side, and looked in first.

"He is dead!" he cried out.

Nick unlocked the iron-barred door.

He entered with Chick and the physician.

They turned the Arab's body over on its back.

The eyes had a blank expression, and there was froth about the mouth.

"He is dead," the doctor said, after he had examined the body.

"How long has he been dead?" the detective asked.

"Not an hour."

"And they have got off."

"Have you any idea who committed this murder?"

"I have."

"Can you find the murderers?"

"I will have them in custody before many hours pass."

"Are you going to notify the police?"

"Not until I have this rascal's murderers under lock and key."

The doctor withdrew.

The two detectives were alone.

Nick had discovered the loss of the Arab's confession.

He saw the small scraps of paper on the floor.

"Chick, gather up every one of those scraps," he said.

"What are they?" Chick inquired.

"They are the remains of Aben-Hamet's confession."

"What will you do with them?"

"Keep them as evidence. We may be able to find words upon the scraps and the Arab's signature. This will go to show that a confession was made."

"These people are desperate."

"They will be still more so, before another twenty-four hours pass."

"Are you going to close in on them?"

"I am."

"What about the phantom?"

"I've discovered nothing new except that he sent me a message."

"Well, I've had better luck."

"You have?"

"I've made a big discovery."

"Have you found traces of Jacques Anton's wife?"

"I've found out all about her. But I need some further papers to settle the matter."

"Can't you get them?"

"No, the only man who could tell anything about them is dead."

"Who is it?"

"Henry Willoughby."

"The millionaire?"

"Yes."

"What has he to do with the matter?"

"Jacques Anton's wife was Henry Willoughby's daughter."

"The tobacco merchant was a bachelor."

"So every one thought."

"How did you find this out?"

"By the records."

"But they don't prove anything. There are any number of Henry Willoughbys, perhaps, and you must have other proof."

"I will tell you what I have found out."

"Let me hear."

"The documents which you gave me furnished me with the clew. I went to the Bureau of Vital Statistics and there, after a long search, I discovered that forty years ago a tobacco worker married a Rose Fairfield. The man's name was Henry Willoughby."

"This is interesting."

"A year later I found the death of Rose Willoughby, and the cause of death child-birth."

"Was the child's birth registered?"

"It was."

"Male or female."

"Female."

"And the parents were Henry Willoughby, a tobacco worker, and his wife Rose?"

"Exactly."

"Go on."

"Seventeen years later I found the marriage of Jacques Anton to Rose Fairfield Willoughby, and here a peculiar discrepancy occurs."

"What is it?"

"The woman stated that both her parents were dead."

"Well?"

"I went on with the search, and the next thing I came across was the registry of the birth of a female child—parents, Jacques Anton and Rose Fairfield Willoughby Anton."

"A female child, eh?"

"And if that child is alive it is the same age as Rose Fairfield."

"Can she be Jacques Anton's daughter?"

"I believe she is."

"What else did you discover?"

"I found the death of Mrs. Anton, and the cause consumption."

"You did not find the death of the child?"

"No."

"Then what did you do?"

"I took down the address where the woman died and went there."

"Where was the place?"

"It was a tenement in Poverty Lane."

"Impossible!"

"It is so, and it is the last house of the row owned by old Nathan Richards."

"What, that house is the best one of the lot."

"Yes, and an old woman still lives there who knew Mrs. Anton."

"This hardly seems credible."

"It is so, though."

"Did you question the woman?"

"I did."

"What did she say?"

"She said that Mrs. Anton was very poor, and when she took sick she nursed her and looked after the baby, whom the mother had named Rose after herself. She says that Mrs. Anton told her that her husband was a seafaring man."

"That is straight enough."

"Three days before Mrs. Anton died, an old gentleman called upon her, and there was quite a scene between them. The old woman was not present, but when the gentleman went away he sent provisions and a strange doctor. Mrs. Anton did not tell her nurse who the gentleman was."

"That was unfortunate."

"Mrs. Anton died, and according to the old woman's statement, the gentleman buried her and then took the child away."

"Is that all you discovered?"

"No."

"I found the undertaker who buried Mrs. Anton."

"Had he any record of the name of the person who paid the burial expenses?"

"He had."

"And the name was?"

"Henry Willoughby."

"Then Rose Fairfield is the millionaire's grandchild."

"Did you examine that photograph closely?"

"Yes, and I saw some resemblance to Rose Fairfield in it, and that was the reason I took hold of the case, for I suspected something of this kind. Now if we only had Willoughby's side of the story."

"I'm afraid we will never get that."

"I'm not so sure of that."

"Why?"

"If we can get hold of the Phantom of Poverty Lane he may be able to tell us what we want to know and furnish us with the missing links."

"Will you send for Jacques Anton?"

"Not until I have Horace Willoughby and Jim Porter under arrest."

"When will that be?"

"I'm going up to the Forty-ninth Street place now. We will get a squad of police and make the descent."

Nick Carter locked up the office, and then he and Chick started for the rendezvous of the gang.

CHAPTER XIII.

A CLEARING UP.

Nick Carter went to the police station and secured a squad of police.

He surrounded the rendezvous.

Nick Carter rapped on the door.

It was opened.

A man looked out.

The detective gave him a clip upon the head with the butt of his revolver.

The man fell.

Two officers took hold of him and dragged him out.

Nick Carter and the others entered the den.

A dozen men were seated around a table drinking.

Jim Porter was at the head of the table.

When the men saw Nick Carter and the bluecoats they sprang to their feet in alarm.

Jim Porter attempted to draw his revolver.

Nick caught hold of his arm and almost wrenched it from its socket.

Then he slipped the irons over the rascal's wrists.

"Curse you!" Porter cried out. "You have me now, but I'll get even yet."

"I'll let you try," Nick replied.

He placed an officer in charge of the den.

They took the prisoners to the station hause and locked them up.

"What next?" Chick inquired, as they came out.

"We must find the lawyer," Nick replied.

"Where are you going to look?"

"At the Willoughby mansion."

Nick and Chick hurried across town.

They did not notice that an old man was following them.

When they reached the Willoughby mansion the man stopped on the corner.

Nick Carter did not ring the doorbell.

He picked the lock of the front door and he and Chick entered.

The detective listened.

He heard voices in the library.

These he recognized as those of the lawyer and his sister Laura.

They were talking excitedly.

Nick and Chick listened outside the door.

"I'm going to take a trip to Europe," the detective heard the lawyer exclaim.

"Who will look after the business?" Laura asked.

"You and Sim Elvers."

"Are you sure that the Arab made a confession?"

"Didn't I read it and tear it up?"

"And Nick Carter knows?"

"Yes, he knows, but he can get no proof."

"What about Porter?"

"He will go with me."

"You had better go alone."

"I will manage to get rid of him in Europe."

"How?"

"I will find a way."

Just then Nick Carter threw open the library door.

He and Chick entered.

The man who had followed the detective and the young man let himself into the hall with a latchkey at the same time.

Then he walked back toward the library.

He entered just as Nick Carter put the handcuffs upon the lawyer's wrists.

Horace looked toward the door.

He saw the man.

Laura also saw him.

Brother and sister uttered cries of terror and fell back into their chairs.

Nick Carter turned around.

He, too, saw the man, and exclaimed:

"Mr. Willoughby!"

"Yes, Mr. Carter, it is I," the millionaire replied, with a smile. "The Phantom of Poverty Lane now stands before you and this dastardly nephew of mine."

"They did not murder you?"

"No, but they would have done so had I not got onto their plans."

"Whom did they murder?"

"A poor old cobbler who made his home on the top floor of one of the tenements."

"But how did you discover their plans?"

"For years I have been going to Poverty Lane, even since the death of my daughter."

"Your daughter!" Laura Willoughby gasped.

"Yes, Miss Laura, I had a daughter, and her child is the girl whom you and this rascal have conspired against."

"Never mind that now," Nick Carter interjected.

"As I was saying, for years I have been going to Poverty Lane. By accident I discovered the hiding place of the gang of which my nephew was the head."

"It's a lie!" the lawyer roared.

"Hold your tongue, villain! One of the gang died, and upon his deathbed he confessed to me and told me all about the plans of the gang, and how to get in and out of the den by the secret entrances. Knowing what I did, I was able to be near when they met and to hear all they said. In this way I discovered that this rascal had decided to kill me and get possession of my property.

"I arranged all of my affairs, and removed all of my valuables and papers to a safe-deposit vault. The will I left in the safe at the office. But here I left a memorandum stating that if I died without a will I desired my nephew and niece to look after Rose.

"You have seen how they obeyed my request."

"Where have you lived?"

"In Poverty Lane, on the top floor of the last house."

"Will you explain why you knocked my assistant, Chick, on the head?"

"I did not do that."

"Who did?"

"The man whom I was looking after in the room was raving with a fever. I moved him into the hidden passage, and went out. He broke out, burst into the room and escaped, after he had assaulted your man. I caught him in the street, and had him taken to a hospital."

"What about the sweet perfume which overcame Chick?"

"That is a harmless narcotic which I secured from the Indies. I wanted to communicate with you, so I concluded to use the perfume on Chick."

"Where were you when you used it?"

"In the room above. It is vacant, and there is a hole in the floor. All I had to do was to drop the perfume through the floor, and in a few minutes Chick was unconscious."

"You mentioned your daughter."

"That is a sad story."

"Please explain."

"When I was a young man I married a young woman named Fairfield. She died and left me with the little child.

"I placed the girl with a family, and as the business was poor I went to Baltimore to work. I sent the family part of my wages to support the child. For several months I did not hear from them, and then I came to New York. I learned that the man and woman had died, and the neighbors said that they believed that my child had died also."

"Did you institute search for her?"

"I did, but could find no trace. Years afterward I was in Poverty Lane. In going around I came across a young woman who was dying with consumption. She looked so much like my wife that I began to question her, and I learned that she was my own daughter. She had married; her husband had been lost at sea, and she had never heard of me.

"After the death of the man and his wife, a woman who had nursed them during their illness, and who supposed that the child was theirs, took my daughter to her home and brought her up.

"When I left her with the man and his wife I placed around her neck a gold locket and chain which belonged to her mother."

"And she wore this when you found her?"

"She did."

"A strange story."

"Very."

"And it is stranger still when I tell you that Jacques Anton, Rose's father, is in New York."

"Impossible!"

Nick Carter told the millionaire about the return of Jacques Anton.

"It is as marvelous as one of Jules Verne's tales," the millionaire murmured.

"Why did you never let Rose know that she was your grandchild?" the detective asked.

"Because I had posed so long as a bachelor that I did not want people to know that I had ever been married."

During this conversation no one had paid any attention to Horace Willoughby.

When the millionaire stopped speaking, Laura uttered a scream and cried out:

"Horace has taken poison!"

Horace Willoughby had managed to get a vial out of his pocket.

Seeing that there was no hope for him, the lawyer placed the vial to his lips and swallowed the poison.

A moment after Laura made the discovery he was dead.

"It is better thus," Nick Carter said, when the guilty man drew his last breath.

"Laura, you can go and pack up your things!" the millionaire said, in a stern tone of voice. "Never do I want to see your face again."

"Have pity on me, uncle!" Laura cried, as she threw herself upon her knees in front of her uncle.

"Pity! You will have pity shown to you in a nunnery."

"What do you propose?"

"I propose to send you to a nunnery. There you can repent."

"I will never go!"

Laura rushed out of the room.

She packed up her things and left the house.

She led an adventurous life abroad, and a few years ago, when she was deserted by her lover, she committed suicide.

"Where is Rose?" the millionaire asked, after Laura had left the room.

"By this time I think she is nursing Alan Walters, whom your nephew and Porter tried to kill."

"Let us go to Walters' house."

"Chick, go to Anton's hotel and bring him over to Alan Walters' residence."

Chick put off, and by the time Nick Carter and the millionaire reached Alan's house, the young man and Anton were there also.

It was a happy party that met in the sick room in spite of all.

A long time was taken up with explanations.

Nick Carter left them and went to attend the disposition of the bodies of the Arab and the lawyer.

Jim Porter was sent to the electric chair for the murder of the old cobbler.

All the other members of the gang were sentenced to State's prison.

Rose and Alan were quietly married as soon as the young man recovered.

They went to live at the Willoughby mansion, and the millionaire and Anton reside with them.

Alan now has full charge of the business, and he is beloved by every one of his workmen.

Nick Carter and his clever assistant, Chick, have worked upon many cases since, but none that was stranger than that of the Phantom of Poverty Lane.

THE END.

It was fortunate that the great detective happened to be passing through Philadelphia, and to be in the Baltimore station, when a young man was stabbed, and a valise containing valuables snatched from him. Otherwise, that mystery would probably never have been cleared up, for the assailant vanished in the most remarkable manner. Nick Carter was so interested that he remained and took charge of the case. His researches led him into most thrilling adventures, which will be found splendidly narrated in No. 344, "Nick Carter Winning a Close Game; or, Bombshells in the Camp."

STORIES OF MYSTERY.

The mystery deepens. The mystery of the Nick Carter Weekly is the mysteriously large number of good stories coming in every week.

There is another big mystery—in relation to the distribution of the splendid prizes we offer on page 32.

Nick Carter and the Mysterious Cavern.

(By Ward Linganfield, Scottdale, Pa.)

In the great metropolis there was a gang of thieves and cutthroats. They would lay around the city killing and robbing the people. At one time they killed a millionaire who was going home at night. They found papers on his person and a key to the great safe in the murdered man's office. The cutthroats planned to throw the millionaire into the East River, so as to make the people believe he was drowned. After this was done they proceeded on their journey to the office to rob the safe. One man was to go into the house and hoist the window, so as to let his pals in.

While walking toward the office they did not notice a man shadowing them. It was the famous detective, Nick Carter. The thieves after gaining the office left the window up, and walked over to the safe. One man got on his knees, inserted the key in the lock, and the ponderous safe door swung open. Another man seized the great bag of money and ran toward the window, followed by the others, when a stern command rang out upon the cool night air, "Hands up, or every dog of you shall die."

The robbers instantly sprang forward, when a pistol shot rang out, followed by a groan from one of the robbers. It was Nick Carter who fired the shot, and the robbers fled down the street, closely followed by the great detective.

Nick noticed that the robbers were gaining on him, and he put forth all his strength, but in vain. Suddenly the robbers disappeared through the ground. This was their place of concealment when closely pursued by the officers. When the robbers disapeared so mysteriously, they found that they were in a small cavern under the ground. They were not surprised, however, because they knew it was such a place. They proceeded westward till they came to a large iron door, which they unlocked and entered into the room. The only occupant was a tall man weighing about one hundred and fifty pounds, and who had red hair. One of the men addressed him as the captain of the gang. His name was Red Bell, and he was a clever electrician. They had tunneled under a bank, using the electricity from a street car wire, which they had tapped, to run an electric engine used to melt the side of the vault in the bank.

Much money and valuable papers were stored in the vaults. In the meanwhile Nick was busy trying to find the trail of the robbers, and at last struck a clew, by finding that there was a secret button to go into the mysterious cavern. He pressed the button and was surprised to find himself shooting downward into a large hole. When he found where he was he pressed another button which he found nearby, and immediately the hole closed up. Nick proceeded along the passage until he came to the iron door. He stopped and listened and heard voices in the room. He heard all of their conversation, and then he detected footsteps coming along the passage from within. He sprang into a small niche in the wall, and was just in time, for the iron door opened and three men appeared. This left only one man in the chamber, and Nick decided to tackle his man and see if the money which the robbers had taken from the millionaire's office was there.

After the footsteps had died away in the distance, Nick cautiously stepped from his place of concealment and went over to the iron door. Fortunately the man inside had not locked the door, and Nick boldly gave it a pull and it swung open. The man inside was scared very much when he recognized Nick. The detective coolly walked over to the man and slipped the handcuffs on his wrists and then tried to make him tell where the money was, but all in vain.

Nick began to search the cavern, and while leaning up against the wall, it suddenly gave way, and Nick tumbled into a small hole. After searching around for a while he found the murdered man's money in a bag. He then took the man to the police station, where he was locked up to await trial. Nick took the money to his residence, where he got Chick and Patsy, his two assistants, to accompany him to the mysterious cavern, where they found the other three men, looking and wondering at the hole in the side of the cavern in which their treasure had been stored.

Nick and his two assistants walked in with cocked revolvers and captured the three men. Nick took the prisoners to the police station, where they were put in cells adjoining the other robber. When Nick fired the shot at the millionaire's office it proved to be the death of one of the robbers.

The body of the millionaire was found in the East River two days later. Nick took the money to the murdered man's residence, where he received a liberal reward for his services.

The robbers were tried, convicted of murder and sentenced to death.

A Desperate Game.

(By Paul Raumitz, Jr., Jersey City, N. J.)

Nick Carter was passing the Grand Central Depot about 8 A. M. As he was passing he saw two well-known thugs in conversation. Nick recognized them as Brockey Gann and Lem Samson. Nick heard Lem say:

"You see that fellow over there? He is one of the richest farmers up the State, and he is stopping at the Cosmopolitan Hotel, so let's follow him."

The old farmer got to his hotel and asked for a drink, and when he was finished he went up to his room. About ten minutes afterward a tall man came in and asked for a drink. As it was 1 A. M. nobody was in the place. So when the bartender's back was turned the tall man went upstairs. He said to himself, "I wonder if he is asleep yet." He tried the door and found it open.

The next morning everybody came down for breakfast except the farmer. So the proprietor told the bartender to see what was the matter with him. The bartender ascended to the attic. The door of the room which the old man had been assigned to stood ajar. The bartender knocked, but there was no answer. He pounded again and shouted. Still no answer. Finally the bartender pushed the door open. A terrible sight met his gaze. Stretched out upon the bed he beheld the old man, with his throat cut from ear to ear. A crime had been committed.

The bartender uttered a cry of alarm. As soon as he recovered from his surprise he dashed off downstairs, crying: "Murder!" at the top of his voice. The proprietor, whose name was William Still, sent word to police headquarters for the chief. The chief came over and examined the body. As it happened Nick Carter was stopping across the way. He was aroused by the cry of "Murder!" came over, saw the body and had it removed. When the body was gone he looked around for clews, but could not find any, so at last he went over to the window. To his surprise he found blood stains on the window sill. He opened the window and found that the murderer had escaped through the yard. Nick decided to do no more that day. The next day he disguised himself as a Bowery tough. As he walked along the Bowery he came across the Red Dragon Inn, which is a resort for all kinds of thieves. He went inside and ordered a drink. On the other side were two men talking in a low tone. Nick decided to hear what they were saying. So he sat a few feet away from them. He heard one say:

"Say, Brockey, that was a desperate chance I took that night, but there was lots in it."

Nick knew that they were the same two that followed the farmer the other night. So Nick went up to the two and said:

"You are under arrest for the murder of Peter Wright," which was the farmer's name.

Nick handcuffed them and took them to the Tombs. Lem Samson was tried and executed, and Brockey Gann was sent to Sing Sing for a term of years.

The Cent Which Was a Clew.

(By Harry Markowitz, New York City.)

"Extra! Extra!" A mysterious case. A man was found murdered in his bachelor apartments at 8 A. M. Friday morning, by the hall boy. He was struck to the heart with a long hairpin. The motive was not known as yet. His name was Johnson.

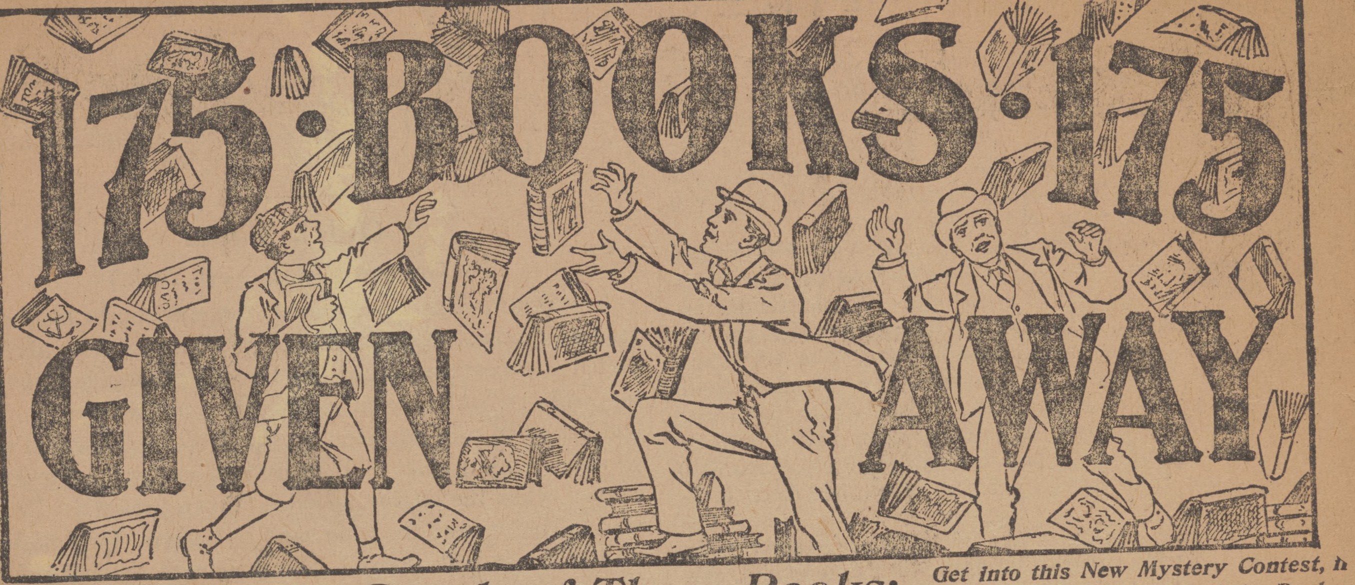
He had a nephew, Mr. Alfred Johnson, who employed Mr. Walton, the great detective, to ferret out the murderer.

Mr. Walton, while searching the room, found a very peculiar cent with a hole in the center and Mag the Fly printed on it. Walton knew that woman as a notorious crook. He arrested her, and she confessed that she killed Johnson because he would not marry her.

A Quick Case.

(By Graham Welch, New York.)

In a comfortable Pullman car, wrapped up in blankets, sat an old man. Opposite him there sat a man with his hat pulled down over his eyes. He had a black muffler around his neck, so that nobody could discover his identity. It had begun to rain outside, and the drops had covered the windows with a mist. The train had just entered a dark canyon when the engine whistled "down brakes." There was a grinding and the train came to a stop. Two masked men stood at both doors. The man with the hat pulled down over his eyes got up and said: "Guard both doors, boys, while I remove the ladies' and gentlemen's trinkets. Those who do not want to be searched can hand over their valuables." And saying that he pulled out two ugly looking pistols. The men and women began handing over money, watches, pins, etc. They all handed over their valuables but the old man wrapped up in the blanket. "Come on there, old gent; get a move on yer, ef yer don't want a streak of daylight through yer." But the old man did not move. "If yer don't hand over when I count three they will be a corpse on this train!" He then slowly said "One." A minute passed by. He said "Two" and took aim at the old man. Just then, crack! and the smoke of a shot came through the blanket. The man with the black muffler gave a cry, the pistol dropped from his hand, and his arm hung down beside his body. He yelled: "Shoot the old duffer." Four shots rang out, but the old man had dropped down behind the seat. He then pulled out a pearl-handled pistol and began blazing at the two masked men in the door. One of the masked men threw up his hands and fell to the floor. The other put his hand to his shoulder and jumped off the platform. The old man then turned and fired at the other two men. Both of the men, after firing a volley, fled from the car. The old man then said: "Now, move one inch, Bob Wilkens, and it will be your last move." Bob Wilkens said: "Who are you, anyway?" The old man said: "Perhaps you know now," and he pulled off a gray wig and beard. "Nick Carter!" Bob Wilkens gasped. "Yes," said Nick, "you see you have saved me the trouble of going to Denver." And before the astonished Bob Wilkens could do anything, Nick had slipped the handcuffs on his uninjured wrist. Nick then said, "Come out on the platform with me." When they got out, Nick put his pistol against Bob Wilkens head. He then said: "Tell your men to leave the train or this pistol might go off." Bob Wilkens called out: "Say, boys, Nick Carter has got his gun at my head and the only way to stop it from going off is for youse to leave the train." The robbers left rather than see their captain's head blown off. So the train was got under way, and in due time reached Denver, where Nick turned over Bob Wilkens at headquarters and received his reward.



Do You Want a Couple of These Books; Or Three, or Five, or Perhaps TEN?...

Get into this New Mystery Contest, h You Do! Here is a list of the Books, from which you may choose if you win a Prize : : : : : :

FIVE FIRST PRIZES!

The five boys who send in the five best stories will each receive **Ten Books** from this list. :: ::

TEN SECOND PRIZES!

The ten boys who send in the next best stories will each receive any **Four Books** they may select in this list :: :: :: :: :: :: :: :: :: ::

FIFTEEN THIRD PRIZES!

The fifteen boys who send in the next best stories will each receive any **Three Books** they may select in this list. :: :: :: :: :: :: ::

TWENTY OTHER PRIZES!

The twenty boys who send in the next best stories will each receive any **Two Books** they may select in this list :: :: :: :: :: :: :: :: ::

By Captain C. B. Ashley
58—Gilbert, the Trapper..................By William Murray Graydon
59—The Rajah's Fortress..............By George H .Coomer
60—The Mountain Cave....................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
61—The Erie Train Boy.....................By Brooks McCormick
62—How He Won..........................By Walter F. Burns
63—In the Sunk Lands....................By Matthew White, Jr.
64—The Tour of a Private Car.............By Frank H. Converse
65—That Treasure..........................By Z. R. Bennett
66—A Young Vagabond....................By Thomas Hughes
67—Tom Brown's School Days..............By Annie Ashmore
68—Smuggler's Cave.........................By Harry Collingwood
69—Pirate Island.........................
70—The New and Amusing History of Sandford and Merton,
By F. C. Burnand

71—Mark Seaworth's Voyage on the Indian Ocean,
By William H. G. Kingston

By Alfred Oldfellow
72—The Way to Success; or, Tom Randall......By William Dalton
73—The Wolf Boy of China..................By George Manville Fenn
74—The Dingo Boys.........................By George H. Coomer
75—The Boys in the Forecastle...........
76—The War Tiger—A Tale of the Conquest of China,
By William Dalton

By Edward S. Ellis
77—Perils of the Jungle.....................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
78—Both Sides of the Continent.............By Brooks McCormick
79—The Rival Battalions....................By Captain Mayne Reid
80—Afloat in the Forest.....................By Edward S. Ellis
81—Arthur Helmuth of the H. & N. C. Railway..By Matthew White, Jr.
82—The Young Editor.........................By William Dalton
83—The Tiger Prince..............By William Murray Graydon
84—The Butcher of Cawnpore.....................By G. A. Henty
85—Facing Death..................................By Richard Dowling
86—Catmur's Cave..............................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
87—The Five-Hundred-Dollar Check.........

88—My Mysterious Fortune................By Matthew White, Jr.
89—Clinton; or, Boy Life in the Country.........By Walter Aimwell
90—Out on the Pampas.......................By G. A. Henty
91—The Crusoes of Guiana..................By Louis Boussenard
92—Specter Gold..............................By Headon Hill
93—A New York Boy..........................By Horatio Alger, Jr.
94—Oscar; or, The Boy Who Had His Own Way..By Walter Aimwell
95—By Sheer Pluck...........................By G. A. Henty
96—An Unprovoked Mutiny....................By James Otis
97—The Giant Islanders.......................By Brooks McCormick
98—The Grand Chaco.....................By George Manville Fenn
99—The Cruise of the Restless; or, On Inland Waterways,
By James Otis

By G. A. Henty
100—Maori and Settler.......................By Captain Mayne Reid
101—The Lone Ranch.......................By Matthew White, Jr.
102—Clearing His Name.......................By Mary A. Denison
103—The Adventures of Rex Staunton..........By Frank H. Converse
104—Heir to a Million......................By Gayle Winterton
105—The Young Actor.........................By G. A. Henty
106—The Boy Knight..........................By Frank H. Converse
107—Van; or, In Search of an Unknown Race..By Jules Verne
108—Texar's Revenge..........................By Herbert D. Ward
109—A Dash to the Pole.......................By Jules Verne
110—Around the World in Eighty Days.............By Wm. H. G. Kingston
111—The Midshipman, Marmaduke Merry....By Jules Verne
112—Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.......By G. A. Henty
113—The Bravest of the Brave..................By Geo. H. Coomer
114—The Old Man of the Mountains..........By Matthew White, Jr.
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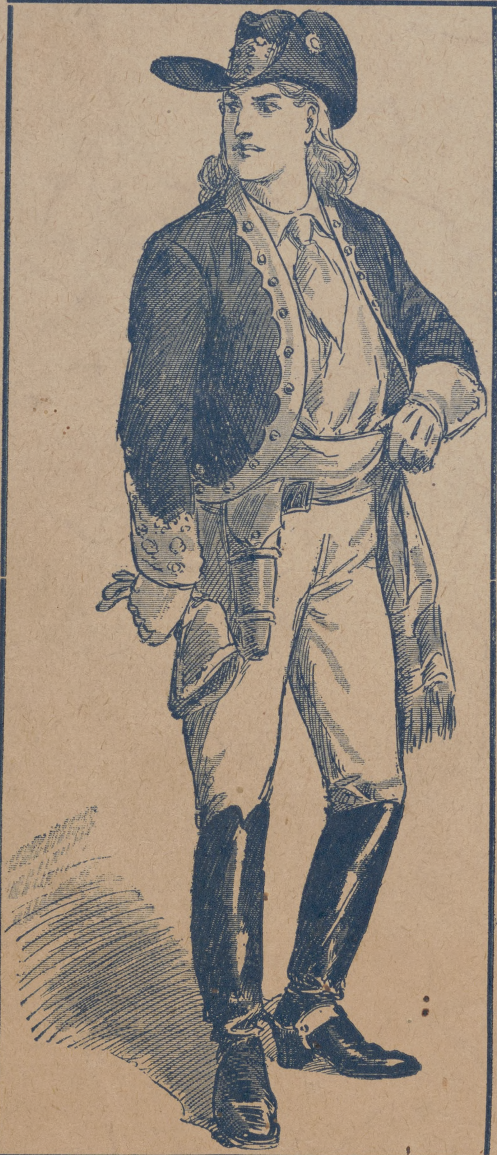

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